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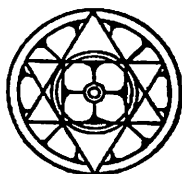
Collected Works of
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA



Sri Aurobindo

Collected Works of
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

VOLUME THREE



THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

**SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
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Publishers' Note

THIS is the second edition of Volume Three of the Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The present volume comprises the first seven parts of the author's widely appreciated book *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* which ran into twelve parts. It may be noted that under the generic title *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* have been collected many of N.K.G.'s most important essays dealing with various aspects of the Yoga-Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

Of the seven parts included in this volume, the first four parts consist of original essays while parts five to seven are based upon talks of the Mother given by her, in French, to the children of the Ashram.

The last five parts (parts eight to twelve) of *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* make up Volume Four of the Collected Works, which has at present gone out of print; but we hope to reprint it in the near future.

13 January 1983

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All Life is Yoga

—SRI AUROBINDO

PART ONE

A Yoga of the Art of Life

1

WHEN Sri Aurobindo said, "Our Yoga is not for ourselves but for humanity," many heaved a sigh of relief and thought that the great soul was after all not entirely lost to the world, his was not one more name added to the long list of Sannyasins that India has been producing age after age without much profit either to herself or to the human society (or even perhaps to their own selves). People understood his Yoga to be a modern one, dedicated to the service of humanity. If service to humanity was not the very sum and substance of his spirituality, it was, at least, the fruitful end and consummation. His Yoga was a sort of art to explore and harness certain unseen powers that can better and ameliorate human life in a more successful way than mere rational scientific methods can hope to do.

Sri Aurobindo saw that the very core of his teaching was being missed by this common interpretation of his saying. So he changed his words and said, "Our Yoga is not for humanity but for the Divine." But I am afraid this change of front, this volte-face, as it seemed, was not welcomed in many quarters; for thereby all hope of having him back for the work of the country or the world appeared to be totally lost and he came to be looked upon again as an irrevocable "metaphysical" dreamer, aloof from physical things and barren, even like the Immutable Brahman.

2

In order to get a nearer approach to the ideal for which Sri Aurobindo has been labouring, we may combine with

3

advantage the two mottoes he has given us and say that his mission is to find and express the Divine in humanity. This is the service he means to render to humanity, viz, to manifest and embody in it the Divine: his goal is not merely an amelioration, but a total change and transformation, the divinisation of human life.

Here also one must guard against certain misconceptions that are likely to occur. The transformation of human life does not necessarily mean that the entire humanity will be changed into a race of gods or divine beings; it means the evolution or appearance on earth of a superior type of humanity, even as man evolved out of animality as a superior type of animality, not that the entire animal kingdom was changed into humanity.

As regards the possibility of such a consummation,—Sri Aurobindo says it is not a possibility but an inevitability—one must remember that the force that will bring about the result and is already at work is not any individual human power, however great it may be, but the Divine himself, it is the Divine's own Shakti that is labouring for the destined end.

Here is the very heart of the mystery, the master-key to the problem. The advent of the superhuman or divine race, however stupendous or miraculous the phenomenon may appear to be, can become a thing of practical actuality, precisely because it is no human agency that has undertaken it but the Divine himself in his supreme potency and wisdom and love. The descent of the Divine into the ordinary human nature in order to purify and transform it and be lodged there is the whole secret of the sadhana in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. The sadhaka has only to be quiet and silent, calmly aspiring, open and acquiescent and receptive to the one Force; he need not and should not try to do things by his independent personal effort, but get them done or let them be done for him in the dedicated consciousness by the Divine Master and Guide. All other Yogas or spiritual disciplines in the past envisaged an ascent of the consciousness, its sublimation into the consciousness of the Spirit and its fusion and dissolution there in the end. The descent of the Divine Consciousness to prepare its definitive home in the dynamic and pragmatic human nature, if considered at all, was not the main theme

of the past efforts and achievements. Furthermore, the descent spoken of here is the descent, not of a divine consciousness—for there are many varieties of divine consciousness—but of the Divine's own consciousness, of the Divine himself with his Shakti. For it is that that is directly working out this evolutionary transformation of the age.

It is not my purpose here to enter into details as to the exact meaning of the descent, how it happens and what are its lines of activity and the results brought about. For it is indeed an actual descent that happens: the Divine Light leans down first into the mind and begins its purificatory work there—although it is always the inner heart which first recognises the Divine Presence and gives its assent to the Divine action—for the mind, the higher mind that is to say, is the summit of the ordinary human consciousness and receives more easily and readily the Radiances that descend. From the Mind the Light filters into the denser regions of the emotions and desires, of life activity and vital dynamism; finally, it gets into brute Matter itself, the hard and obscure rock of the physical body, for that too has to be illumined and made the very form and figure of the Light supernal. The Divine in his descending Grace is the Master-Architect who is building slowly and surely the many-chambered and many-storeyed edifice that is human nature and human life into the mould of the Divine Truth in its perfect play and supreme expression. But this is a matter which can be closely considered when one is already well within the mystery of the path and has acquired the elementary essentials of an initiate.

Another question that troubles and perplexes the ordinary human mind is as to the time when the thing will be done. Is it now or a millennium hence or at some astronomical distance in future, like the cooling of the sun, as someone has suggested for an analogy. In view of the magnitude of the work one might with reason say that the whole eternity is there before us, and a century or even a millennium should not be grudged to such a labour—for it is nothing less than an undoing of untold millenniums in the past and the building of a far-flung futurity. However, as we have said, since it is the Divine's own work and since Yoga means a concentrated and involved process of action, effectuating in a minute what

would perhaps take years to accomplish in the natural course, one can expect the work to be done sooner rather than later. Indeed, the ideal is one of *here* and *now*—here upon this earth of material existence and now in this life, in this very body—not hereafter or elsewhere. How long exactly that will mean, depends on many factors, but a few decades on this side or the other do not matter very much.

As to the extent of realisation, we say again that that is not a matter of primary consideration. It is not the quantity but the substance that counts. Even if it were a small nucleus it would be sufficient, at least for the beginning, provided it is the real, the genuine thing—

*Swalṇamāpyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt.*¹

Now, if it is asked what is the proof of it all, how can one be sure that one is not running after a mirage, a chimera? We can only answer with the adage, the proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof.

3

I have a word to add finally in justification of the title of this essay. For, it may be asked, how can spirituality be considered as one of the Arts or given an honourable place in their domain?

From a certain point of view, from the point of view of essentials and inner realities, it would appear that spirituality is, at least, the basis of the arts, if not the highest art. If art is meant to express the soul of things, and since the true soul of things is the divine element in them, then certainly spirituality, the discipline of coming in conscious contact with the Spirit, the Divine, must be accorded the regal seat in the hierarchy of the arts. Also, spirituality is the greatest and the most difficult of the arts; for it is the art of life. To make of life a perfect work of beauty, pure in its lines, faultless in its rhythm, replete with strength, iridescent with light, vibrant with delight—an embodiment of the Divine, in a word—is

¹ *The Gita*, II. 40

the highest ideal of spirituality; viewed as such, spirituality—the spirituality that Sri Aurobindo practises—is the *ne plus ultra* of artistic creation.

Nature's Own Yoga

1

SRI Aurobindo's Yoga is in the direct line of Nature's own Yoga. Nature has a Yoga which she follows unfailingly and inevitably—for it is her innermost law of being. Yoga means, in essence, a change or transformation of consciousness, a heightening and broadening of consciousness which is effected by communion or union or identification with a higher and vaster consciousness.

This process of a developing consciousness in Nature is precisely what is known as Evolution. It is the bringing out and fixing of a higher and higher principle of consciousness, hitherto involved and concealed behind the veil, in the earth consciousness as a dynamic factor in Nature's manifest working. Thus, the first stage of evolution is the status of inconscient Matter, of the lifeless physical elements; the second stage is that of the semi-conscious life in the plant, the third that of the conscious life in the animal, and finally the fourth stage, where we stand at present, is that of the embodied self-conscious life in man.

The course of evolution has not come to a stop with man and the next stage, Sri Aurobindo says, which Nature envisages and is labouring to bring out and establish is the life now superconscious to us, embodied in a still higher type of created being, that of the superman or god-man. The principle of consciousness which will determine the nature and build of this new being is a spiritual principle beyond the mental principle which man now incarnates: it may be called the Supermind or Gnosis.

For, till now Mind has been the last term of the evolutionary

consciousness—Mind as developed in man is the highest instrument built up and organised by Nature through which the self-conscious being can express itself. That is why the Buddha said: Mind is the first of all principles, Mind is the highest of all principles: indeed Mind is the constituent of all principles—*mano puṇṇangamā dhammā*.¹ The consciousness beyond mind has not yet been made a patent and dynamic element in the life upon earth; it has been glimpsed or entered into in varying degrees and modes by saints and seers; it has cast its derivative illuminations in the creative activities of poets and artists, in the finer and nobler urges of heroes and great men of action. But the utmost that has been achieved, the summit reached in that direction, as exemplified in spiritual disciplines, involves a withdrawal from the evolutionary cycle, a merging and an absorption into the static status that is altogether beyond it, that lies, as it were, at the other extreme—the Spirit in itself, Atman, Brahman, Sachchidananda, Nirvana, the One without a second, the Zero without a first.

The first contact that one has with this static supra-reality is through the higher ranges of the mind: a direct and closer communion is established through a plane which is just above the mind—the Overmind, as Sri Aurobindo calls it. The Overmind dissolves or transcends the ego-consciousness which limits the being to its individualised formation bounded by an outward and narrow frame or sheath of mind, life and body; it reveals the universal Self and Spirit, the cosmic godhead and its myriad forces throwing up myriad forms; the world-existence there appears as a play of ever-shifting veils upon the face of one ineffable reality, as a mysterious cycle of perpetual creation and destruction—it is the overwhelming vision given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the Gita. At the same time, the initial and most intense experience which this cosmic consciousness brings is the extreme relativity, contingency and transitoriness of the whole flux, and a necessity seems logically and psychologically imperative to escape into the abiding substratum, the ineffable Absoluteness.

This has been the highest consummation, the supreme goal which the purest spiritual experience and the deepest aspiration of the human consciousness generally sought to attain.

¹ *The Dhammapada*, I. 1

But in this view, the world or creation or Nature came in the end to be looked upon as fundamentally a product of Ignorance: ignorance and suffering and incapacity and death were declared to be the very hallmark of things terrestrial. The Light that dwells above and beyond can be made to shed for a while some kind of lustre upon the mortal darkness but never altogether to remove or change it—to live in the full light, to be in and of the Light means to pass beyond. Not that there have not been other strands and types of spiritual experiences and aspirations, but the one we are considering has always struck the major chord and dominated and drowned all the rest.

But the initial illusory consciousness of the Overmind need not at all lead to the static Brahmic consciousness or Sunyam alone. As a matter of fact, there is in this particular process of consciousness a hiatus between the two, between Maya and Brahman, as though one has to leap from the one into the other *somehow*. This hiatus is filled up in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga by the principle of Supermind, not synthetic-analytic¹ in knowledge like Overmind and the highest mental intelligence, but inescapably unitarian even in the utmost diversity. Supermind is the Truth-consciousness at once static and dynamic, self-existent and creative: in Supermind the Brahmic consciousness—Sachchidananda—is ever self-aware and ever manifested and embodied in fundamental truth-powers and truth-forms for the play of creation; it is the plane where the One breaks out into the Many and the Many still remain one, being and knowing themselves to be but various self-expressions of the One; it develops the spiritual archetypes, the divine names and forms of all individualisations of an evolving existence.

The Upanishads speak of a solar and a lunar Path in the spiritual consciousness. Perhaps they have some reference to these two lines—one through the Mayic consciousness of the Overmind enters into the static Bliss, ecstatic Nihil, and the

¹ The Supermind is not merely synthetic. "The Supermind is synthetic only on the lowest spaces of itself, where it has to prepare the principles of Overmind, —synthesis is necessary only where analysis has taken place, one has dissected everything, put in pieces (analysis), so one has to piece together. But Supermind is unitarian, has never divided up, so it does not need to add and piece together the parts and fragments. It has always held the conscious Many together in the conscious One."

SRI AUROBINDO

other mounts still farther to the solar status which is a mass, a sea, an infinity of that light and ecstasy but which can at the same time express and embody itself as the creative Truth-consciousness (*sūrya sāvitrī*).

In the Supermind things exist in their perfect spiritual reality; each is consciously the divine reality in its transcendent essence, its cosmic extension, its spiritual individuality; the diversity of a manifested existence is there, but the mutually exclusive separativeness has not yet arisen. The ego, the knot of separativity, appears at a later and lower stage of involution; what is here is indivisible nexus of individualising centres of the one eternal truth of being. Where Supermind and Overmind meet, one can see the multiple godheads, each distinct in his own truth and beauty and power and yet all together forming the one supreme consciousness infinitely composite and inalienably integral. But stepping back into Supermind one sees something more—Oneness gathering into itself all diversity, not destroying it; but annulling and forbidding the separative consciousness that is the beginning of Ignorance. The first shadow of the Illusory Consciousness, the initial possibility of the movement of Ignorance comes in when the supramental light enters the penumbra of the mental sphere. The movement of Supermind is the movement of light without obscurity, straight, unwavering, unswerving, absolute. The Force here contains and holds in their oneness of Reality the manifold but not separated lines of essential and unalloyed truth: its march is the inevitable progression of each one assured truth entering into and upholding every other and therefore its creation, play or action admits of no trial or stumble or groping or deviation; for each truth rests on all others and on that which harmonises them all and does not act as a Power diverging from and even competing with other Powers of being. In the Overmind commences the play of divergent possibilities—the simple, direct, united and absolute certainties of the supramental consciousness retire, as it were, a step behind and begin to work themselves out through the interaction first of separately individualised and then of contrary and contradictory forces. In the Overmind there is a conscious underlying Unity but yet each Power, Truth, Aspect of that Unity is encouraged to work out its

possibilities as if it were sufficient to itself and the others are used by it for its own enhancement until in the denser and darker reaches below Overmind this turns out a thing of blind conflict and battle and, as it would appear, of chance survival. Creation or manifestation originally means the concretisation or devolution of the powers of Conscious Being into a play of united diversity; but on the line which ends in Matter it enters into more and more obscure forms and forces and finally the virtual eclipse of the supreme light of the Divine Consciousness. Creation as it descends towards the Ignorance becomes an involution of the Spirit through Mind and Life into Matter; evolution is a movement backward, a return journey from Matter towards the Spirit: it is the unravelling, the gradual disclosure and deliverance of the Spirit, the ascension and revelation of the involved consciousness through a series of awakenings—Matter awakening into Life, Life awakening into Mind and Mind now seeking to awaken into something beyond the Mind, into a power of conscious Spirit.

The apparent or actual result of the movement of Nescience—of Involution—has been an increasing negation of the Spirit, but its hidden purpose is ultimately to embody the Spirit in Matter, to express here below in cosmic Time-Space the splendours of the timeless Reality. The material body came into existence bringing with it inevitably, as it seemed, mortality; it appeared even to be fashioned out of mortality, in order that in this very frame and field of mortality, Immortality, the eternal Spirit Consciousness which is the secret truth and reality in Time itself as well as behind it, might be established and that the Divine might be possessed, or rather, possess itself not in one unvarying mode of the static consciousness, as it does even now behind the cosmic play, but in the play itself and in the multiple mode of the terrestrial existence.

2

The secret of evolution, I have said, is an urge towards the release and unfoldment of consciousness out of an apparent unconsciousness. In the early stages the movement is very

slow and gradual; there it is Nature's original unconscious process. In man it acquires the possibility of a conscious and therefore swifter and concentrated process. And this is in fact the function of Yoga proper, viz, to bring about the evolution of consciousness by hastening the process of Nature through the self-conscious will of man.

An organ in the human being has been especially developed to become the effective instrument of this accelerated Yogic process—the self-consciousness which I referred to as being the distinctive characteristic of man is a function of this organ. It is his soul, his “psychic being”; originally it is the spark of the Divine Consciousness which came down and became involved in Matter and has been endeavouring ever since to release itself through the upward march of evolution. It is this which presses on continually as the stimulus to the evolutionary movement; and in man it has attained sufficient growth and power and has come so far to the front from behind the veil that it can now lead and mould his external consciousness. It is also the channel through which the Divine Consciousness can flow down into the inferior levels of human nature. It is the “being no bigger than the thumb ever seated within the heart”, spoken of in the Upanishads. It is likewise the basis of true individuality and personal identity. It is again the reflection or expression in evolutionary Nature of one's essential self—*jīvātman*—that is above, an eternal portion of the Divine, one with the Divine and yet not dissolved and lost in it. The psychic being is thus on the one hand in direct contact with the Divine and the higher consciousness, and on the other it is the secret upholder and controller (*bhartā, antaryāmin*) of the inferior consciousness, the hidden nucleus round which the body and the life and the mind of the individual are built up and organised.

The first decisive step in Yoga is taken when one becomes conscious of the psychic being, or, looked at from the other side, when the psychic being comes forward and takes possession of the external being, begins to initiate and influence the movements of the mind and life and body and gradually free them from the ordinary round of ignorant nature. The awakening of the psychic being means, as I have said, not only a deepening and heightening of the consciousness and its release

from the obscurity and limitation of the inferior Prakriti, confined to the lower threefold status, into what is behind and beyond; it means also a return of the deeper and higher consciousness upon the lower hemisphere and a consequent purification and illumination and regeneration of the latter. Finally, when the psychic being is in full self-possession and power, it can be the vehicle of the direct supramental consciousness—which will then be able to act freely and absolutely for the entire transformation of the external nature, its transfiguration into a perfect body of the Truth-consciousness—in a word, its divinisation.

This then is the supreme secret, not the renunciation and annulment, but the transformation of the ordinary human nature:—first of all, its *psychicisation*, that is to say, making it move and live and be in communion and identification with the light of the psychic being, and, secondly, through the soul and the ensouled mind and life and body, to open out into the supramental consciousness and let it come down here below and work and achieve.

The soul or the true being in man uplifted in the supramental consciousness and at the same time coming forward to possess a divinised mind and life and body as an instrument and channel of its self-expression and an embodiment of the Divine Will and Purpose—such is the goal that Nature is seeking to realise at present through her evolutionary *élan*. It is to this labour that man has been called so that in and through him the destined transcendence and transformation can take place.

It is not easy, however, nor is it necessary for the moment to envisage in detail what this divinised man would be like, externally—his mode of outward being and living, *kim āsita vrajeta kim*, as Arjuna queried—or how the collective life of the new humanity would function or what would be the composition of its social fabric. For what is happening is a living process, an organic growth; it is being elaborated through the actions and reactions of multitudinous forces and conditions, known and unknown; the precise configuration of the final outcome cannot be predicted with exactitude. But the Power that is at work is omniscient; it is selecting, rejecting, correcting, fashioning, creating, co-ordinating elements in accordance

with and by the drive of the inviolable law of Truth and Harmony that reigns in Light's "own home"—*swe dame*—the Supermind.

It is also to be noted that as mind is not the last limit of the march of evolution, even so the progress of evolution will not stop with the manifestation and embodiment of the Supermind. There are other still higher principles beyond and they too presumably await manifestation and embodiment on earth. Creation has no beginning in time (*anādi*) nor has it an end (*ananta*). It is an eternal process of the unravelling of the mysteries of the Infinite. Only, it may be said that with the Supermind the creation here enters into a different order of existence. Before it there was the domain of Ignorance, after it will come the reign of Light and Knowledge. Mortality has been the governing principle of life on earth till now; it will be replaced by the consciousness of immortality. Evolution has proceeded through struggle and pain; hereafter it will be a spontaneous, harmonious and happy flowering.

Now, with regard to the time that the present stage of evolution is likely to take for its fulfilment, one can presume that since or if the specific urge and stress has manifested and come up to the front, this very fact would show that the problem has become a problem of actuality, and even that it can be dealt with as if it had to be solved now or never. We have said that in man, with man's self-consciousness or the consciousness of the psychic being as the instrument, evolution has attained the capacity of a swift and concentrated process, which is the process of Yoga; the process will become swifter and more concentrated, the more that instrument grows and gathers power and is infused with the divine afflatus. In fact, evolution has been such a process of gradual acceleration in tempo from the very beginning. The earliest stage, for example, the stage of dead Matter, of the play of the mere chemical forces was a very, very long one; it took millions and millions of years to come to the point when the manifestation of life became possible. But the period of elementary life, as manifested in the plant world that followed, although it too lasted a good many millions of years, was much briefer than the preceding period—it ended with the advent of the first animal form. The age of animal life, again, has been very

much shorter than that of the plant life before man came upon earth. And man is already more than a million or two years old—it is fully time that a higher order of being should be created out of him.

Sri Aurobindo and his 'School'

A CONSIDERABLE amount of vague misunderstanding and misapprehension seems to exist in the minds of a certain section of our people as to what Sri Aurobindo is doing in his retirement at Pondicherry. On the other hand, a very precise exposition, an exact formula of what he is not doing has been curiously furnished by a well-known patriot in his indictment of what he chooses to call the "Pondicherry School" of contemplation. But he has arrived at this formula by "openly and fearlessly" affirming what does not exist; for the things that Sri Aurobindo is accused of doing are just the things that he is not doing. In the first place, Sri Aurobindo is not doing "peaceful contemplation"; in the second place, he is not doing active propaganda either; in the third place, he is not doing *prānāyāma* or even *dhyāna* in the ordinary sense of the word; and, lastly, he is not proclaiming or following the maxim that "although action may be tolerated as good, his particular brand of Yoga is something higher and better."

Evidently the eminent politician and his school of activism are labouring under a Himalayan confusion: when they speak of Sri Aurobindo, they really have in their mind some of the old schools of spiritual discipline. But one of the marked aspects of Sri Aurobindo's teaching and practice has been precisely his insistence on putting aside the inert and life-shunning quietism, illusionism, asceticism and monasticism of a latter-day and decadent India. These ideals are perhaps as much obstacles in his way as in the way of the activist school. Only Sri Aurobindo has not had the temerity to say that "it is a weakness to seek refuge in contemplation" or to suggest that a Buddha was a weakling or a Shankara a poltroon.

This much as regards what Sri Aurobindo is not doing; let us now turn and try to understand what he is doing. The distinguished man of action speaks of conquering Nature and fighting her. Adopting this war-like imagery, we can affirm that Sri Aurobindo's work is just such a battle and conquest. But the question is, what is "nature" and what is the kind of conquest that is sought, how are we to fight and what are the required arms and implements? A good general should foresee all this, frame his plan of campaign accordingly and then only take the field. The above-mentioned leader proposes "ceaseless and unselfish action" as the way to fight and conquer Nature. He who speaks thus does not know and cannot mean what he says.

European science is conquering Nature in a way. It has attained to a certain kind and measure, in some fields a great measure, of control and conquest; but however great or striking it may be in its own province, it does not touch man in his more intimate reality and does not bring about any true change in his destiny or his being. For the most vital part of nature is the region of the life-forces, the powers of disease and age and death, of strife and greed and lust—all the instincts of the brute in man, all the dark aboriginal forces, the forces of ignorance that form the very groundwork of man's nature and his society. And then, as we rise next to the world of the mind, we find a twilight region where falsehood masquerades as truth, where prejudices move as realities, where notions rule as ideals.

This is the present nature of man, with its threefold nexus of mind and life and body, that stands there to be fought and conquered. This is the inferior nature, of which the ancients spoke, that holds man down inexorably to a lower *dharma*, imperfect mode of life—the life that is and has been the human order till today. No amount of ceaseless action, however selflessly done, can move this wheel of Nature even by a hair's breadth away from the path that it has carved out from of old. Human nature and human society have been built up and are run by the forces of this inferior nature, and whatever shuffling and reshuffling we may make in its apparent factors and elements, the general scheme and fundamental form of life will never change. To displace earth (and to conquer

nature means nothing less than that) and give it another orbit, one must find a fulcrum outside earth.

Sri Aurobindo does not preach flight from life and a retreat into the silent and passive Infinite; the goal of life is not, in his view, the extinction of life. Neither is he satisfied on that account to hold that life is best lived in the ordinary round of its unregenerate dharma. If the first is a blind alley, the second is a vicious circle,—both lead nowhere.

Sri Aurobindo's sadhana starts from the perception of a Power that is beyond the ordinary nature yet is its inevitable master, a fulcrum, as we have said, outside the earth. For what is required first is the discovery and manifestation of a new soul-consciousness in man which will bring about by the very pressure and working out of its self-rule an absolute reversal of man's nature. It is the Asuras who are now holding sway over humanity, for man has allowed himself so long to be built in the image of the Asura; to dislodge the Asuras, the Gods in their sovereign might have to be forged in the human being and brought into play. It is a stupendous task, some would say impossible; but it is very far removed from quietism or passivism. Sri Aurobindo is in retirement, but it is a retirement only from the outward field of present physical activities and their apparent actualities, not from the true forces and action of life. It is the retreat necessary to one who has to go back into himself to conquer a new plane of creative power,—an entrance right into the world of basic forces, of fundamental realities, into the flaming heart of things where all actualities are born and take their first shape. It is the discovery of a power-house of tremendous energism and of the means of putting it at the service of earthly life.

And, properly speaking, it is not at all a school, least of all a mere "school of thought", that is growing round Sri Aurobindo. It is rather the nucleus of a new life that is to come. Quite naturally it has almost insignificant proportions at present to the outward eye, for the work is still of the nature of experiment and trial in very restricted limits, something in the nature of what is done in a laboratory when a new power has been discovered, but has still to be perfectly formulated in its process. And it is quite a mistake to suppose that there is a vigorous propaganda carried on in its behalf or that there is

a large demand for recruits. Only the few, who possess the call within and are impelled by the spirit of the future, have a chance of serving this high attempt and great realisation and standing among its first instruments and pioneer workers.

Sri Aurobindo's Gita

THE supreme secret of the Gita, *rahasyam uttamam*, has presented itself to diverse minds in diverse forms. All these however fall, roughly speaking, into two broad groups of which one may be termed the *orthodox* school and the other the *modern* school. The orthodox school as represented, for example, by Shankara or Sridhara, viewed the Gita in the light of the spiritual discipline more or less current in those ages, when the purpose of life was held out to be *emancipation* from life, whether through desireless work or knowledge or devotion or even a combination of the three. The Modern School, on the other hand, represented by Bankim in Bengal and more thoroughly developed and systematised in recent times by Tilak, is inspired by its own Time-Spirit and finds in the Gita a gospel of life-fulfilment. The older interpretation laid stress upon a spiritual and religious, which meant therefore in the end an *other-worldly* discipline; the newer interpretation seeks to dynamise the more or less quietistic spirituality which held the ground in India of later ages, to set a premium upon action, upon duty that is to be done in our workaday life, though with a spiritual intent and motive.

This neo-spirituality which might claim its sanction and authority from the real old-world Indian discipline—say, of Janaka and Yajnavalkya—labours, however, in reality, under the influence of European *activism* and *ethicism*. It was this which served as the immediate incentive to our spiritual revival and revaluation and its impress has not been thoroughly obliterated even in the best of our modern exponents. The bias of the vital urge and of the moral imperative is apparent enough in the modernist conception of a dynamic spirituality. Fundamentally the dynamism is made to reside in the *élan* of the ethical man,—the spiritual element, as a consciousness of

supreme unity in the Absolute (Brahman) or of love and delight in God, serving only as an atmosphere for the mortal activity.

Sri Aurobindo has raised action completely out of the mental and moral plane and has given it an absolute spiritual life. Action has been spiritualised by being carried back to its very source and origin, for it is the expression in life of God's own Consciousness-Energy (Chit-Shakti).

The Supreme Spirit, Purushottama, who holds in himself the dual reality of Brahman and the world, is the master of action who acts but in actionlessness, the Lord in whom and through whom the universes and their creatures live and move and have their being. Karmayoga is union in mind and soul and body with the Lord of action in the execution of his cosmic purpose. And this union is effected through a transformation of the human nature, through the revelation of the Divine Prakriti and its descent upon and possession of the inferior human vehicle.

Arrived so far, we now find, if we look back, a change in the whole perspective. Karma and even Karmayoga, which hitherto seemed to be the pivot of the Gita's teaching, retire somewhat into the background and present a diminished stature and value. The centre of gravity has shifted to the conception of the Divine Nature, to the Lord's own status, to the consciousness above the three Gunas, to absolute consecration of each limb of man's humanity to the Supreme Purusha for his descent and incarnation and play in and upon this human world.

The higher secret of the Gita lies really in the later chapters, the earlier chapters being a preparation and passage to it or partial and practical application. This has to be pointed out, since there is a notion current which seeks to limit the Gita's effective teaching to the earlier part, neglecting or even discarding the later portion.

The style and manner of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation¹ is also supremely characteristic: it does not carry the impress of a mere metaphysical dissertation—although in matter it clothes throughout a profound philosophy; it is throbbing with the luminous life of a prophet's message, it is instinct with something of the Gita's own *mantraśakti*.

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry

PART TWO

Our Ideal

OUR ideal—the ideal of Sri Aurobindo—we may say without much ado, is to divinise the human, immortalise the mortal, spiritualise the material. Is the ideal possible? Is it practicable? Our task will be precisely, first of all, to show that it is possible, next that it is probable and finally that it is inevitable.

Now to the first question. It is usually contended that the ideal is an impossibility, a chimera, since it involves on the face of it a self-contradiction. For, is not divinity the very opposite of humanity, immortality that of mortality and Matter that of the Spirit? These pairs, all of them, are formed of two mutually exclusive terms. This is what Mayavada posits. But need it be necessarily and inevitably so? What is affirmed is after all a postulate and one can start from other postulates as well. The truth, of course, is that all theories or views of existence are centrally formulations of an experience; and each experience has its own postulate.

To begin with, we refuse to admit or recognise that there is or is bound to be a contradiction or opposition between Matter and Spirit, between body and soul or between the human and the divine. We start with an experience, a realisation which declares the essential unity and identity of the duality. That is the thing that has to be posited first clear and nett. The question next arises how the two are one and identical; this demands some clarification. For, is it meant that they are one and the same in the sense that Zeus and Jupiter are the same or that water and H_2O are the same? Apart from any barren theorising, is it not a universal and eternal and invariable experience that to attain to the Divine one must leave behind the human, to become the immortal one must cease to be a mortal and to live in the Spirit one

has to deny Matter? The real answer, however, is that it is so and it is not so. The dilemma is not so trenchant as it has been made out to be.

To the regard of one line of experience, Matter seems opposed to Spirit only so far as the actual and outer formulation of Matter is concerned: even then the opposition is only apparent and relative. This is the very crux of the problem. For, to such a regard Spirit becomes Matter also, it is also Matter—*annam brahma eva*. Spirit is consciousness, *cit*; and Matter, it is said, is unconsciousness, *acit*. But unconsciousness need not be and is not, in our view, the absolute negation or utter absence of consciousness, it is only an involved or involute consciousness. If consciousness is wakefulness, unconsciousness is nothing more than forgetfulness: it is only an abeyance or suspension of consciousness, not annihilation.

Thus the spiritualisation of Matter becomes possible simply because Matter and Spirit are not absolutely different, contradictory or incommensurable entities; they are one and the same reality, in different modes—even as water or water vapour and ice are in substance one and identical, although different in appearance. Spirit has become Matter and Matter at heart is Spirit. Spirit is latent in Matter, as Matter itself is a possible formulation involved in Spirit. Matter has come out of Spirit as Spirit pressed upon itself and gradually condensed and consolidated into the concrete material reality. Spirit has become Matter by a process of crystallisation, of self-limitation and exclusive concentration. The movement follows a definite line of self-modification, along a downward gradient till it is consummated: it is one among an infinite variety of possible self-modifications, chosen and exclusively developed with a special purpose and a definite fulfilment in view.

A movement of involution through a series of terms—of consciousness—of gradually diminishing facial value has made the Spirit terminate in Matter. If it is so, it stands to reason that a movement of evolution, a return journey would make Matter culminate in Spirit. Thus the very fact of Spirit having become Matter, of Matter being a mode of the Spirit, at once creates the possibility of Matter being transmuted into Spirit. Now even granting such a possibility, it may be argued

yet that the thing achieved is a resolution of Matter into Spirit; it means the destruction of the characteristic form and consistency that is called Matter. We know, thanks to modern Science, that Matter can be transmuted into pure energy, but then it loses its materiality, it is dematerialised.

That is what some of the old spiritual disciplines taught. Even if there is no unbridgeable gulf between Spirit and Matter, they said, even if they are not incommensurables but form one reality, Spirit is the reality in essence, Matter is an inferior formulation. Matter has unrolled itself out of the infinite, it can only be and it has got to be rolled back again into the Spirit.

Here comes the second cardinal principle in Sri Aurobindo's vision of the reality, viz, that an "inferior" formulation of the Spirit, an involute on a "lower" plane is not essentially or truly, even in its outer and dynamic nature and character, a mere temporary or by-the-way reality, an "epiphenomenon"; its sole function is not simply to impede, diminish and obscure the real reality so that it has to be gradually rejected and eliminated on the way back to the source. As a matter of fact, an inferior formulation has a double function; in the line of descent it limits, obscures, deviates and in the end falsifies the higher reality; at the same time, however, it concretises, energises, incarnates what it obscures. But in the ascending line, that is to say, in the movement of reversal from the inferior to the superior, the movement need not be always that of disincarnation and dissolution, it may be that of purification and illumination and fulfilment. The analogy will not be, then, that of Matter being dematerialised into pure energy but that of Matter being transformed into a radiant substance, not losing itself in the process of radiation, being wholly made of the undying luminous stuff.

Such a movement of transforming evolution is not merely a possibility or a probability: it is a fact of Nature. Indeed, natural evolution means nothing less than that. First of all, evolution means the reversibility of Nature; for, it is the backward movement of an involutionary process. We have said that the supreme truth and reality—*sat-cit-ānanda*, as it is called—multiplied and concretised itself gradually through various steps and stages of a diminishing power of expression or an

increasing entropy of self-concealment: the main grades being the Supermind, the Overmind, the Higher Mind, the Mind, Life and lastly the body or Matter. Having arrived at the extreme end that Matter represents,—the farthest apparently from the original source,—the movement turns round and seeks to go up the ladder through the same gradations it has traversed. But this process of reversal is not merely a resolution and dissolution, it is a process of greater fulfilment and synthesis, of sublimation as well as of integration.

Matter is the starting-point of evolution, it is there merely a physico-chemical entity. But it undergoes a change, the first of its kind, a transmutation when it is taken up by life, when it becomes the basis and receptacle of a living organism: vitalised Matter behaves differently from physico-chemical Matter. A farther and greater change is brought about in Matter when it is raised still higher and taken up by the mind, when it answers to the vibrations of a mental organism: mentalised Matter has yet a third norm of behaviour. The transformation of Matter in slow degrees towards a greater plasticity and spontaneity, a growing sentiency and luminosity is evident as one proceeds up the rungs of natural evolution.

This drive of evolution is a constant and permanent fact of Nature and she is in travail to bring about higher and higher stages of material transformation. It may not be easy to forecast from the present status what the future mode or modes of Matter would be like, even as it was surely impossible to forecast mentalised Matter or living Matter, but that does not make the thing less inevitable.

The inevitability arises from the very fact of this evolutionary urge that a stage will come when Matter will undergo another, more radical and crucial change; it will be taken up by a higher reality than mind and suffused with a light and power belonging to that reality: a spiritual consciousness will emerge and with it spiritualised Matter, even as a mental consciousness emerged and mentalised (however inadequately) Matter, and yet anterior to that a vital consciousness emerged and vitalised Matter. There cannot be a limit to the degree of spiritualisation also; for the degree of the Spirit that Nature manifests in an earthly body will also be the measure to which the body itself is spiritualised. A perfectly dynamic spiritual

consciousness will have the power to perfectly spiritualise the body and life and mind. And this grade and power of the supreme Spirit Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind.

We will try to understand the nature of sublimation and transformation by analogy and illustration. Mind, for example, we know, is an instrument which by itself is incapable of attaining to the knowledge of the Spirit or the consciousness of the Truth. As it is constituted at present, it is not only not capable of that knowledge and consciousness, but is an obstacle to them. Its vibrations and formulations disturb and vitiate the higher rhythm. That is why it is repeated so often in the Upanishads:

*Naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā*¹

or

*Yan manasā na manute*²

or again

*Na manasā prāptum śakyah*³

and so on. Yet the same mind when it is not independent and master but subservient and obedient to the higher light becomes a channel for its dynamic embodiment, a conduit for its canalisation and expression in earthly life. Therefore the Upanishad says also,

*Manasaivedamāptavyam*⁴

A mind that is not rigidly limited to the ratiocinative process, but has been remoulded in the light and rhythm of inspiration and intuition and revelation and other higher sources still beyond becomes at once a transfigured vessel, an apt instrument to incarnate and dynamise in the physical and material field truths and realities that normally lie far and above. Something of the kind, though in a small measure, happens, for example, in a poet or an artist. A poet who moves by vision and inspiration is not, at least need not be, devoid of mind: the mind in his case is not annihilated or even kept in abeyance, but sublimated, undergoing a reorientation and reorganisation, acquiring a new magnitude. Even if there is

¹ This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning.—*Katha*, I. 2. 9

² That which thinks not by the mind.—*Kena*, I. 4

³ Not with the mind has one the power to obtain it.—*Katha*, II. 3. 12

⁴ By the mind too this has to be seized.—*Ibid*, II. 2. 23

a suspension of the ratiocinative faculty, it would not mean a suspension of the mental power in itself, but rather an enhancement in a new degree. The same may happen to the other parts and planes of human consciousness and existence.

Of course, if one chooses, one can sidetrack these intervening ranges of consciousness between the Spirit and Matter, and strike something like a chord line between the two; but also one need not follow this bare straight ascetic line of ascension; one can pursue a wider, a circular or global movement which not only arrives but fulfils. The latter is Nature's method of activity, Nature being all reality. The exclusive line is meant for individuals, and even as such it has a value and sense in the global view, for this too is contributory to the total urge and its total consummation.

We have seen that spiritualisation of Matter is an inevitable consummation that is being worked out by evolutionary Nature. We can go now still further and say that it is not merely a far-off inevitability that will come about some day or other, but a more or less imminent certainty. For Nature's evolutionary dynamis is not the only agent at work, it is not the only assurance of the *grand finale* envisaged. The Divine himself descends and meets and takes up the evolutionary force: he comes down as a dynamic conscious force in the terrestrial movement carrying the truth that is to be established here and now, acts and drives, first from above and then in and through the level actuality, and thus speeds up and fulfils within a brief span what Nature left to herself would perhaps take aeons—Brahmic Yugas—to accomplish. Indeed Nature's evolutionary crises, where she had to effect a transcendence from one plane of creation to another, are always worked out swiftly by such a descent which imposes an inexorable physical pressure as it were upon an earthly material which otherwise is slow to move and change.

Even of this descent of the Divine Consciousness, however, there are varying degrees, in accordance with the nature of the work it has got to do. In the inferior ranges of evolutionary Nature—the lower hemisphere, as it is called, of Mind, Life and Matter—Descent is partial and indirect and relative, the aim being a more or less reconditioning of Matter, not its thorough transformation: this becomes possible when Nature

has risen to Mind and has prepared herself to take the further, the crucial leap into the higher hemisphere, the sphere of dynamic spiritual truth.

Nature's attempt at the transcendence of Mind opens the door for a more and more direct and integral descent of the Divine Consciousness, and in its highest degrees—the degrees of the Supermind—the Descent means a reversal of the normal values, a swift and total transfiguration of earthly life into the mould of supernal spiritual realities. An absolute degree of the Descent, an irruption of the Divine Consciousness in its supreme purity and fullness becomes inevitable in the end: for that alone can bring about the fulfilment that Nature ultimately has in view. Matter will yield completely, and life-power too, only to the direct touch and embrace of the Divine's own self.

In this age we stand at some such critical juncture in Nature's evolutionary history. Its full implications, the exact degree of the immediate achievement, the form and manner of the Descent are things that remain veiled till the fact is accomplished. Something of it is revealed, however, to the eye of vision and the heart of faith, something of it is seized by those to whom it chooses to disclose itself—

*Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ*¹

¹ Only he whom this Being chooses can win Him.—*Katha* I. 2.23

Lines of the Descent of Consciousness

1

THE world has been created by a descent of consciousness; it maintains itself, it proceeds and develops through a series of descents. In fact, creation itself is a descent, the first and original one, the descent of the supreme Reality into Matter and as Matter. The supreme Reality—the fount and origin of things and even that which is beyond—although essentially something absolute, indescribable, ineffable, indeterminable, has been, for purposes of the human understanding, signalised as a triune entity of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. That is to say, first of all, it is, it exists always and for ever—invariably, in unbroken continuity; secondly, it exists not unconsciously, but consciously, in and as full consciousness; thirdly, it exists in delight—through delight and for and as delight; it has no other reason for existence but the pleasure and joy of simply existing. This primal, this original truth or reality transcends creation and is beyond and antecedent to it. What then is creation, what is its nature and character? Strange to say, it is the very opposite of the primal reality. First of all, it is not really existent: its existence is only another name for non-existence, as, in its phenomenal constitution, it is variable, ephemeral, transient and fragmentary or even seems made, as it were, of the stuff of dream. Secondly, it is not conscious; on the contrary, it is unconsciousness. And lastly it is not delight; there is an original insensibility and much undelight, grief and sorrow. That is the actual physical creation; or so, at least, it appears to be. How is this paradox to be explained? What is the significance of this riddle?

Descent is the master-key that unravels the mystery—that

is to say, the descent of the delightful conscious existence as the material world. But why this descent at all? What was the necessity? What was the purpose? The *why* of a thing is always difficult, if not impossible, to gauge. But we shall try to understand the *how* of the phenomenon, and in so doing perhaps we may get at the *why* of it also. At present let us content ourselves by saying that such was His will—*la sua voluntade*—such was His wish—*sa aicchat*. For once perhaps instead of saying, "Let there be light", He (or something in Him) must have said, "Let there be darkness", and there was Darkness.

But the point is, this darkness did not come all on a sudden but arrived gradually through a developing process—we do not refer to physical time here but something antecedent, something parallel to it in another dimension. Let us see how it all came about.

The absolute in its triple or triune status (not in its supreme being but as we see it prior to manifestation) is in essence and principle an infinity and unity. Indeed, it is *the* infinite unity, and its fundamental character is a supreme and utter equality—*samam brahma*. It is then a *status* or *statis*, that is to say, a state of perfectly stable equilibrium in which there is no movement of difference or distinction, no ripple of high and low or ebb and flow, no mark of quantity or quality. It is a stilled sea of self-identity, a vast limitless or pure consciousness brooding in trance and immobility. And yet in the bosom of this ineffable and inviolable equality, in the very hush and lull there lies secreted an urge, a pressure, a possibility towards activity, variation and even an eventual inequality. For the presence and possibility of dynamism is posited by the very infinity of the Infinite, since without it, the Infinite would be incapable of motion, expression and fulfilment of its Force.

There is thus inherent in the vast inalienable equality of the absolute Reality, a Force which can bring out centres of pressure, nuclei of dynamism, nodes of modulation. It is precisely round these centres of precipitation that the original and basic unity crystallises itself and weaves a pattern of harmonious multiplicity. Consciousness, by self-pressure,—*tapas taptvā*—turns its even and undifferentiated pristine equanimity into ripples and swirls, eddies and vortices of delight, matrices of creative activity. Thus the One becomes

Many by a process of self-concentration and self-limitation.

At the very outset when and where the Many has come out into manifestation in the One—here also it must be remembered that we are using a temporal figure in respect of an extra-temporal fact—there and then is formed a characteristic range of reality which is a perfect equation of the one and the many: that is to say, the one in becoming many still remains the same immaculate one in and through the many, and likewise the many in spite of its manifoldness—and because of the special quality of the manifoldness—still continues to be the one in the uttermost degree. It is the world of fundamental realities. Sri Aurobindo names it the Supermind or Gnosis. It is something higher than but distantly akin to Plato's world of Ideas or Noumena (*ideai, noumena*) or to what Plotinus calls the first divine emanation (*nous*). These archetypal realities are realities of the Spirit, Idea-forces, truth-energies, the root consciousness-forms, *ṛta cit*, in Vedic terminology. They are seed-truths, the original mother-truths in the Divine Consciousness. They comprise the fundamental essential many aspects and formulations of an infinite Infinity. At this stage these do not come into clash or conflict, for here each contains all and the All contains each one in absolute unity and essential identity. Each individual formation is united with and partakes of the nature of the one supreme Reality. Although difference is born here, separation is not yet come. Variety is there, but not discord, individuality is there, not egoism. This is the first step of Descent, the earliest one—not, we must remind ourselves again, historically but psychologically and logically—the descent of the Transcendent into the Cosmic as the vast and varied Supermind—*citraḥ praketo ajaniṣṭa vibhwa*—of the Absolute into the relational manifestation as *Vidyāsakti* (Gnosis).

The next steps, farther down or away, arrive when the drive towards differentiation and multiplication gathers momentum becomes accentuated, and separation and isolation increase in degree and emphasis. The lines of individuation fall more and more apart from each other, tending to form closed circles, each confining more and more exclusively to itself, stressing its own particular and special value and function, in contradistinction to or even against other lines. Thus

the descent or fall from the Supermind leads, in the first instance, to the creation or appearance of the Overmind. It is the level of consciousness where the perfect balance of the One and the Many is disturbed and the emphasis begins to be laid on the many. The source of incompatibility between the two just starts here as if Many is not-One and One is not-Many. It is the beginning of Ignorance, Avidya, Maya. Still in the higher hemisphere of the Overmind, the sense of unity is yet maintained, although there is no longer the sense of absolute identity of the two; they are experienced as complementaries, both form a harmony, a harmony as of different and distinct but conjoint notes. The Many has come forward, yet the unity is also there supporting it—the unity is an immanent godhead, controlling the patent reality of the Many. It is in the lower hemisphere of the Overmind that unity is thrown into the background half-submerged, flickering, and the principle of multiplicity comes forward with all insistence. Division and rivalry are the characteristic marks of its organisation. Yet the unity does not disappear altogether, only it remains very much inactive, like a sleeping partner. It is not directly perceived and envisaged, not immediately felt but is evoked as a reminiscence. The Supermind, then, is the first crystallisation of the Infinite into individual centres, in the Overmind these centres at the outset become more exclusively individualised and then jealously self-centred.

The next step of Descent is the Mind where the original unity and identity and harmony are disrupted to a yet greater degree, almost completely. The self-delimitation of consciousness—which is proper to the Supermind and even to the Overmind, at least in its higher domains—gives way to self-limitation, to intolerant egoism and solipsism. The consciousness withdraws from its high and wide sweep, narrows down to introvert orbits. The sense of unity in the mind is, at most, a thing of idealism and imagination; it is an abstract notion, a supposition and a deduction. Here we enter into the very arcana of Maya, the rightful possession of Ignorance. The individualities here have become totally isolated and independent and mutually conflicting lines of movement. Hence the natural incapacity of mind, as it is said, to comprehend more than one object simultaneously. The Super-

mind and, less absolutely, the Overmind have a global and integral outlook: they can take in each one in its purview all at once the total assemblage of things, they differentiate but do not divide—the Supermind not at all, the Overmind not categorically. The Mind has not this synthetic view, it proceeds analytically. It observes its object by division, taking the parts piecemeal, dismantling them, separating them, attending to each one at a time. And when it observes it fixes itself on one point, withdrawing its attention from all the rest. If it has to arrive at a synthesis, it can only do so by collating, aggregating and summing. Mental consciousness is thus narrowly one-pointed: and in narrowing itself, being farther away from the source it becomes obscurer, more and more outward gazing (*parāñci khāni*) and superficial. The One Absolute in its downward march towards multiplicity, fragmentation and partiality loses also gradually its subtlety, its suppleness, its refinement, becomes more and more obtuse, crude, rigid and dense.

Between the Overmind and the Mind proper, varying according to the degree of immixture of the two, according to the degree of descent and of emergence of one and the other respectively, there are several levels of consciousness of which three main ones have been named and described by Sri Aurobindo. The first one nearest to the Overmind and the least contaminated by the Mind is pure Intuition; next, the intermediary one is called the Illumined Mind, and last comes the Higher Mind. They are all powers of the Overmind functioning in the Mind. The higher ranges are always more direct, intense, synthetic, dynamic than the lower ones where consciousness is slower, duller, more uncertain, more disintegrated. The lower the consciousness descends the more veiled it becomes, losing more and more the directness, the sureness, the intensity and force and the synthetic unity native to the highest ranges of our consciousness and being.

A further descent into obscurity occurs when consciousness passes from Mind to Life. Darkness is almost visible here: there is a greater withdrawal on the part of each unit from its surrounding reality, a narrower concentration upon one's own separative existence—shades of the prison-house have gathered close around. The light, already dulled and faint in

the mind, has become a lurid glare here. Passion has arisen and desire and hunger and battle and combat.

Here also in the vital three ranges can be distinguished—the lower becoming more and more turbid and turbulent and fierce or more and more self-centred and selfish. These levels can best be seen by their impact on our vital being and formations there. The first, the highest one, the meeting or confluence of the Mind and the Vital is the Heart, the centre of emotion, the knot of the external or instrumental vehicle, of the frontal consciousness, behind which is born and hides the true individualised consciousness, the psyche. The mid-region is the Higher Vital consisting of larger (egoistic) dynamisms, such as high ambition, great enterprise, heroic courage, capacity for work, adventure, masterfulness, also such movements as sweeping violences, mighty hungers, intense arrogances. The physical seat of this movement is, as perhaps the *Tantras* would say, the domain ranging between the heart and the navel. Lower down ranges the Lower Vital which consists of small desires, petty hankerings, blind cravings—all urges and impulses that are more or less linked up with the body and move to gross physical satisfactions.

But always the Consciousness is driving towards a yet greater disintegration and fragmentation, obscuration and condensation of self-oblivion. The last step in the process of transmutation or involution is Matter where consciousness has wiped itself out or buried itself within so completely and thoroughly that it has become in its outward form totally dark, dense, hard, pulverised into mutually exclusive grains. The supreme luminous Will of Consciousness in its gradual descent and self-obliviation finally ends in a rigid process of mere mechanised drive.

This is, so far then, the original and primal line of descent. It is the line down which the absolute Reality, the absolute Consciousness and the absolute Delight have turned into unreality and unconsciousness and undelight. But it is not all loss and debit. There is a credit side too. For it is only in this way, viz, by the manifestation of utter Ignorance, that the supreme Absolute has become concrete, the Formless has entered into form, the Bodiless has found a body: what was originally an indeterminate equal Infinity of pure conscious-

ness, has become determinate and dynamic in the individual multiplicity of corporeal consciousness. What is the sense in all that, what is the gain or upshot? We shall presently see.

When consciousness has reached the farthest limit of its opposite, when it has reduced itself to absolutely unconscious and mechanical atoms of Matter, when the highest has descended into and become the lowest, then, by the very force of its downward drive, it has swung round and begun to mount up again. As it could not proceed farther on the downward gradient, having reached the extreme and ultimate limit of inconscience, consciousness had to turn round, as it were, by the very pressure of its inner impetus. First, then, there is a descent, a gradual involution, a veiling and closing up; next, an ascent, a gradual evolution, unfoldment and expression. We now see, however, that the last limit at the bottom—Matter—although appearing to be unconscious, is really not so: it is inconscient. That is to say, it holds consciousness secreted and involved within itself; it is, indeed, a special formulation of consciousness. It is the exclusive concentration of consciousness upon single points in itself: it is consciousness throwing itself out in scattered units and, by reason of separative identification with them and absorption into them, losing itself, forgetting itself in an absolute fixation of attention. The phenomenon is very similar to what happens when in the ordinary consciousness a worker, while doing a work, becomes so engrossed in it that he loses consciousness of himself, identifies himself with the work and in fact becomes the work, the visible resultant being a mechanical execution.

Now this imprisoned consciousness in Matter forces Matter to be conscious again when driven on the upward gradient. This tension creates a fire, as it were, in the heart of Matter, a mighty combustion and whorl in the core of things, of which the blazing sun is an image and a symbol. All this pressure and heat and concussion and explosion mean a mighty struggle in Matter to give birth to that which is within. Consciousness that is latent must be made patent; it must reveal itself in Matter and through Matter, making Matter its vehicle and embodiment. This is the mystery of the birth of Life, the first sprouting of consciousness in Matter. Life is half-awakened consciousness, consciousness yet in a dream state. Its earliest

and most rudimentary manifestation is embodied in the plant or vegetable world. The submerged consciousness strives to come still further up, to express itself to a greater degree and in a clearer mode, to become more free and plastic in its movements; hence the appearance of the animal as the next higher formulation. Here consciousness delivers itself as a psyche, a rudimentary one, no doubt, a being of feeling and sensation, and elementary mentality playing in a field of vitalised Matter. Even then it is not satisfied with itself, it asks for a still more free and clear articulation: it is not satisfied, for it has not yet found its own level. Hence after the animal, arrives man with a full-fledged Mind, with intelligence and self-consciousness and capacity for self-determination.

Thus we see that evolution, the unfolding of consciousness follows exactly the line of its involution, only the other way round: the mounting consciousness re-ascends step by step the same gradient, retraces the same path along which it had descended. The descending steps are broadly speaking (1) Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, (2) Supermind and its secondary form Overmind, (3) Mind—(i) mind proper and (ii) the intermediary psyche, (4) Life, (5) Matter. The ascending consciousness starting from Matter rises into Life, passes on through Life and Psyche into Mind, driving towards the Supermind and Schchidananda. At the present stage of evolution, consciousness has arrived at the higher levels of Mind; it is now striving to cross it altogether and enter the Overmind and the Supermind. It will not rest content until it arrives at the organisation in and through the Supermind: for that is the drive and purpose of Nature in the next cycle of evolution.

Physical Science speaks of irreversibility and entropy in Nature's process. That is to say, it is stated that Nature is rushing down and running down: she is falling irrevocably from a higher to an ever lower potential of energy. The machine that Nature is, is driven by energy made available by a break-up of parts and particles constituting its substance. This katabolic process cannot be stopped or retraced; it can end only when the break-up ceases at dead equilibrium. You cannot lead the river up the channel to its source, it moves inevitably, unceasingly towards the sea in which it exhausts itself and finds its last repose and—extinction. But whatever

physical Science may say, the science of the spirit declares emphatically that Nature's process is reversible, that a growing entropy can be checked and countermanded: in other words, Nature's downward current resulting in a continual loss of energy and a break-up of substance is not the only process of her activity. This aspect is more than counterbalanced by another one of upward drive and building up, of re-energisation and re-integration. Indeed, evolution, as we have explained it, is nothing but such a process of synthesis and new creation.

Evolution, which means the return movement of consciousness, consists, in its apparent and outward aspect, of two processes, or rather two parallel lines in a single process. First, there is the line of sublimation, that is to say, the lower purifies and modifies itself into the higher; the denser, the obscurer, the baser mode of consciousness is led into and becomes the finer, the clearer, the nobler mode. Thus it is that Matter rises into Life, Life into Psyche and Mind, Mind into Overmind and Supermind. Now this sublimation is not simply a process of refinement or elimination, something in the nature of our old Indian *nivṛtti* or *pratyāhāra*, or what Plotinus called *epistrophe* (a turning back, withdrawal or re-absorption): it includes and is attended by the process of integration also. That is to say, as the lower rises into the higher, the lower does not cease to exist thereby, it exists but lifted up into the higher, infused and modified by the higher. Thus when Matter yields Life, Matter is not destroyed: it means Life has appeared in Matter and exists in and through Matter and Matter thereby has attained a new mode and constitution, for it is no longer merely a bundle of chemical or mechanical reactions, it is instinct with life, it has become organic matter. Even so, when Life arrives at Mind, it is not dissolved into Mind but both Life and Matter are taken up by the mental stuff, life becomes dynamic sentience and Matter is transformed into the grey substance of the brain. Matter thus has passed through a first transformation in Life and a second transformation in Mind; it awaits other transformations on other levels beyond Mind. Likewise, Life has passed through a first transformation in Mind and there are stages in this transformation. In the plant, Life is in its original pristine mode; in the animal, it has become sentient and centralised

round a rudimentary desire-soul; in man, life-force is taken up by the higher mind and intelligence giving birth to idealism and ambition, dynamisms of a forward-looking purposive will.

We have, till now, spoken of the evolution of consciousness as a movement of ascension, consisting of a double process of sublimation and integration. But ascension itself is only one line of a yet another larger double process. For along with the visible movement of ascent, there is a hidden movement of descent. The ascent represents the pressure from below, the force of buoyancy exerted by the involved and secreted consciousness. But the mere drive from below is not sufficient all by itself to bring out or establish the higher status. The higher status itself has to descend in order to be manifest. The urge from below is an aspiration, a yearning to move ever upward and forward; but the precise goal, the status to be arrived at is not given there. The more or less vague and groping surge from below is canalised, it assumes a definite figure and shape, assumes a local habitation and a name when the higher descends at the crucial moment, takes the lower at its peak-tide and fixes upon it its own norm and form. We have said that all the levels of consciousness have been created—loosened out—by a first Descent; but in the line of the first Descent the only level that stands in front at the outset is Matter, all the other levels are created no doubt but remain invisible in the background, behind the gross veil of Matter. Each status stands confined, as it were, to its own region and bides its time when each will be summoned to concretise itself in Matter. Thus Life was already there on the plane of Life even when it did not manifest itself in Matter, when mere Matter, dead Matter was the only apparent reality on the material plane. When Matter was stirred and churned sufficiently so as to reach a certain tension and saturation, when it was raised to a certain degree of maturity, as it were, then Life appeared: Life appeared, not because that was the inevitable and unavoidable result of the churning, but because Life descended from its own level to the level of Matter and took Matter up in its embrace. The churning, the development in Matter was only the occasion, the condition precedent. For, however much one may shake or churn Matter, whatever change one may create in it by a shuffling and reshuffling of

its elements, one can never produce Life by that alone. A new and unforeseen factor makes its appearance, precisely because it comes from elsewhere. It is true all the planes are imbedded, submerged, involved in the complex of Matter; but, in point of fact, all planes are involved in every other plane. The appearance or manifestation of a new plane is certainly prepared, made ready to the last—the last but one—degree by the urge of the inner, the latent mode of consciousness that is to be; still the actualisation, the bursting forth happens only when the thing that has to manifest itself descends, the actual form and pattern can be imprinted and established by that alone. Thus, again, when Life attains a certain level of growth and maturity, a certain tension and orientation—a definite vector, so to say, in the mathematical language—when it has, for example, sufficiently organised itself as a vehicle of the psychic element of consciousness, then it buds forth into Mind, but only when the Mind has descended upon it and into it. As in the previous stage, here also Life cannot produce Mind, cannot develop into Mind by any amount of mechanical or chemical operations within itself, by any amount of permutation and combination or commutation and culture of its constituent elements, unless it is seized on by Mind itself. After the Mind, the next higher grade of consciousness shall come by the same method and process, viz, first by an uplifting of the mental consciousness—a certain widening and deepening and katharsis of the mental consciousness—and then by a descent, gradual or sudden, of the level or levels that lie above it.

This, then, is the nature of creation and its process. First, there is an Involution, a gradual foreshortening—a disintegration and concretisation, an exclusive concentration and self-oblivion of consciousness by which the various levels of diminishing consciousness are brought forth from the plenary light of the one supreme Spirit, all the levels down to the complete eclipse in the unconsciousness of the multiple and disintegrate Matter. Next, there is an Evolution, that is to say, embodiment in Matter of all these successive states, appearing one by one from the downmost to the topmost; Matter incarnates, all other states contribute to the incar-

nation and uphold it, the higher always transforming the lower in a new degree of consciousness.

Creation, the universe in its activity, is thus not simply a meaningless play, a pointless fancy. It has a purpose, an end, a goal, a fulfilment, and it follows naturally a definite pattern of process. The goal is the concretisation, the materialisation (which includes, of course, vitalisation and mentalisation) of the Spirit and the spiritual values. It means the establishment of divine names and forms in terrestrial individuals leading a divine life, individually and collectively here below.

2

We have so far spoken of two lines of descent. But in either case the descent was of a general and impersonal character. Consciousness was considered as a mere force, movement or quality. There is another aspect, however, in which the descent is of a particular and personal character and consciousness is not force or status only but conscious being or Person.

The various movements or forces of consciousness that play in the various fields or levels of creation are not merely states or degrees and magnitudes, currents and streams of consciousness: they are also personalities with definite forms and figures—not physical indeed, yet very definite even when subtle and fluidic. Thus the supreme Reality, which is usually described as the perfect status of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, is not merely a principle but a personality. It is the Supreme Person with his triune nature (Purushottama). It is the Divine as the supreme Knower and Doer or Creator and Lover. The creation in or from that status of consciousness is not simply a play or result of the force of consciousness, it is even more truly the embodiment of a conscious Will; it is the will of the Divine Father executed by the Divine Mother.

Now, as the Reality along with its consciousness, in the downward involutionary course towards materialisation, has been gradually disintegrating itself, multiplying itself, becoming more and more obscure and dense in separated and isolated units, even so the Person too has been following a parallel course of disintegration and multiplication and obscuration

and isolation. At the origin lies, as we have said, the Perfect Person, the Supreme Person, in his dual aspect of being and nature, appearing as the supreme *puruṣa* and the supreme *prakṛti*, our Father and our Mother in the highest heaven.

Next is the domain of the Supermind with which the *manifestation* of the Divine starts. We have said it is the world of typical realities, of the first seed-realities, where the One and the Many are united and fused in each other, where the absolute unity of the Supreme maintains itself in undiminished magnitude and expresses and formulates itself perfectly in and through the original multiplicity. Here take birth the first personalities, absolute truth-forms of the Divine. Here are the highest gods, the direct formations of the Divine himself. Here are the Four Powers and Personalities of *īśwara* whom Sri Aurobindo has named after the Vaishnava terminology: (i) Mahavira, embodying the Brahmin quality of Knowledge and Light and wide Consciousness, (ii) Balarama, embodying the Kshatriya quality of Force and intense dynamism, (iii) Pradyumna, embodying the quality of love and beauty—the Vaishya virtue of mutuality and harmony and solidarity, and (iv) Aniruddha, embodying the Sudra quality of competent service, of organisation and execution in detail. Corresponding with these Four there are the other Four Powers and Personalities of the Divine Mother—*īśwari*: (i) Maheshwari, (ii) Mahakali, (iii) Mahalakshmi and (iv) Mahasaraswati. Next in the downward gradient comes the Overmind where the individualised powers and personalities of the Divine tend to become self-sufficient and self-regarding; their absolute unity is loosened and the lines of multiplicity begin to be more independent of each other, each aiming at a special fulfilment of its own. Still the veil that is being drawn over the unity is yet transparent which continues to be sufficiently dynamic. This is the abode of the gods, the true and high gods: it is these that the Vedic Rishis appear to have envisaged and sought after. The all gods (*viśve devāḥ*) were indeed acknowledged to be but different names and forms of one supreme godhead (*devāḥ*): it is the one god, says Rishi Dirghatamas, who is called multifariously whether as Agni or Yama or Matariswan; it is the one god, again, who is described as having a thousand heads and a thousand feet. And yet they are separate entities,

each has his own distinct and distinctive character and attribute, each demands a characteristic way of approach and worship. The tendency towards an exclusive stress is already at work on this level and it is the perception of this truth that lies behind the term *henotheism* used by European scholars to describe the Vedic Religion.

The next stage of devolution is the Mind proper. There or perhaps even before, on the lower reaches of the Overmind, the gods have become all quite separate,—self-centred, each bounded in his own particular sphere and horizon. The overmind gods—the true gods—are creators in a world of balanced or harmoniously held difference; they are powers that fashion each a special fulfilment, enhancing one another at the same time (*parasparam bhāvayantaḥ*). Between the Overmind and the Mind there is a class of lesser gods—they have been called *formateurs*; they do not create in the strict sense of the term, they give form to what the anterior gods have created and projected. These form-makers that consolidate the encasement, fix definitely the image, have most probably been envisaged in the Indian *dhyanamūrtis*. But in the Mind the gods become still more fixed and rigid, “stereotyped”; the mental gods inspire exclusive systems, extreme and abstract generalisations, theories and principles and formulae that, even when they seek to force and englobe all in their cast-iron mould, can hardly understand or tolerate each other.

Mind is the birth-place of absolute division and exclusivism—it is the “own home” of egoism. Egoism is that ignorant mode—a twist or knot of consciousness which cuts up the universal unity into disparate and antagonistic units: it creates isolated, mutually exclusive whorls in the harmonious rhythm and vast commonalty of the one consciousness or conscious existence. The Sankhya speaks of the principle of ego coming or appearing after the principle of vastness (*mahat*). The Vast is the region above the Mind, where the unitary consciousness is still intact; with the appearance of the Mind has also appeared an intolerant self-engrossed individualism that culminates, as its extreme and violent expression, in the *asura*—Asura, the mentalised vital being.

The Asura or the Titan stands where consciousness descends

from the Mind into the Vital or Life-Force. He is the personification of ambition and authority and arrogance, he is the intolerant and absolute self-seeker—he is Daitya, the son of division. The Asura belongs to what we call the Higher Vital; but lower down in the Mid Vital, made wholly of unmixed life impulses, appear beings that are still less luminous, less controlled, more passionate, vehement and violent in their self-regarding appetite. They are the Rakshasas. If the Asura is perverse power, the Rakshasa is insatiate hunger.

All the ancient legends about a principle—and a personality—of Denial and Ignorance, of an Everlasting Nay—refer to this fact of a descending consciousness, a Fall. The Vedantic *māyā*, spoken of sometimes as the Dark Mother, seems to be the personification of the lower Overmind, Jehovah and Satan of the Hebrews, Olympians and Titans of the Greeks, Ahriman and Ahura Mazda of old Iran, the sons of Diti and Aditi the Indian Puranas speak of, are powers and personalities of consciousness when it has descended entirely into the mind and the vital where the division is complete. These lower reaches have completely lost the unitary consciousness; still there are beings even here that have succeeded in maintaining it as a memory or an aspiration, although in a general way the living reality of the oneness is absent. It is significant that the term *asura* which came to mean in classical and mythological ages a + *sura*, not-god, the Titan, had originally a different connotation and etymology, *asu* + *ra*, one having force or strength, and was used as a general attribute of all the gods. The degradation in the sense of the word is a pointer to the spiritual Fall: Satan was once Lucifer, the bringer or bearer of light. We may mention in this connection that these beings of which we are speaking, dwelling in unseen worlds, are of two broad categories—(1) beings that are native to each plane and immutably confined and bound to that plane, and (2) those that extend their existence through many or all planes and assume on each plane the norm and form appropriate to that plane. But this is a problem of individual destiny with which we are not concerned at present.

We were speaking of the descent into the Vital, the domain of dynamism, desire and hunger. The Vital is also the field of some strong creative Powers who follow, or are in secret

contact with the line of unitary consciousness, who are open to influences from a deeper or higher or subtler consciousness. Along with the demons there is also a line of *daimona*, guardian angels, in the hierarchy of vital beings. Much of what is known as aesthetic or artistic creation derives its spirit from this sphere. Many of the gods of beauty and delight are denizens of this heaven. Gandharvas and Kinnaras are here, Dionysus and even Apollo perhaps (at least in their mythological aspect—in their occult reality they properly belong to the Overmind which is the own home of the gods), many of the angels, seraphs and cherubs dwell here. In fact, the mythological heaven for the most part can be located in this region.

All this is comprised within what we term the Higher or the Middle Vital. In the lower vital, we have said, consciousness has become still more circumscribed, dark, ignorantly obstinate, disparately disintegrated. It is the seed-bed of lust and cruelty, of all that is small and petty and low and mean, all that is dirt and filth. It is here that we place the *pisācas*, djinns, ghouls and ghosts, and vampires, beings who possess the “possessed”.

Further down in the scale where life-force touches Matter, where Life is about to precipitate as Matter, appear beings of a still lower order, of smaller dimensions and magnitudes—imps, elfs, pixies, goblins, gnomes, fairies or dryads and naiads. There are even creatures or entities so close to Matter that they come into being and pass away with the building up and breaking of a definite pattern of material organisation. This individualisation of consciousness as beings or persons seems to disappear altogether when we enter the strictly material plane. There is here only an agglomeration of uniform dead particles.

We have thus far followed the course of the break-up of Personality, from the original one supreme Person, through a continuous process of multiplication and disintegration, of parcellation and crystallisation into more and more small self-centred units, until we reach the final pulverisation as purely material physico-chemical atoms. Now with the reversal of consciousness, in its return movement, we have again a process of growth and building up of individuality and personality, with the awakening and ascension of consciousness from level

to level on the physical plane and in the material embodiment, there occurs too an evolution of the personal aspect of the reality.

We say that at the lowest level of involution, in Matter, where consciousness has zero magnitude, there is no personality or individuality. It is all a mechanical play of clashing particles that constantly fly apart or come together according to the force or the resultant of forces that act upon them. An individuality means a bounded form as its basis of reaction and a form that tends to persist and grow by assimilation; it means a centre of a definite manner and pattern of reaction. Individuality, in its literal sense, designates that which cannot be divided (*in-dividus*). Division is only another name for death for the particular entity. Even in the case of cell-division or self-division of some lower organisms, in the first instance the original living entity disappears and, secondly, the succeeding entities, created by division, always re-form themselves again into integral wholes. A material particle, on the other hand, is divisible *ad infinitum*. We have been able to divide even an atom (which means also *that which cannot be divided*) to such an extent as to reduce it to a mere charge of energy, nay, we have sublimated it to a geometrical point. Individualisation starts with the coming of life. It is a ganglion of life-force round which a particular system of action and reaction weaves itself. The characteristic of individuality is that each one is unique, each relates itself to others and to the environment in its own way, each expresses itself, puts forth its energy, receives impacts from outside in a manner that distinguishes it from others. It is true this character of individuality is not very pronounced in the earlier or rudimentary forms of life. Still it is there: it grows and develops slowly along the ladder of evolution. Only in the higher animals it attains a clear and definite norm and form.

In man something else or something more happens. For man is not merely an individual, he is also a personality. He is the outcome of a twofold growth and revelation. He has outgrown the vital and climbed into Mind, and he has dived into the Heart and touched his inner soul, his true psychic centre. It is this soul that is the source of his personality.

The formulation or revelation of the Psyche marks another

line of what we have been describing as the Descent of Consciousness. The phenomenon of individualisation has at its back the phenomenon of the growth of the Psyche. It is originally a spark or nucleus of consciousness thrown into Matter that starts growing and organising itself behind the veil, in and through the movements and activities of the apparent vehicle consisting of the triple nexus of Body (Matter) and Life and Mind. The extreme root of the psychic growth extends perhaps right into the body, consciousness of Matter, but its real physical basis and tenement is found only with the growth and formation of the physical heart. And yet the psychic individuality behind the animal organisation is very rudimentary. All that can be said is that it is there, *in potentia*, it exists, it is simple *being*: it has not started *becoming*. This is man's especiality: in him the psychic begins to be dynamic, to be organised and to organise, it is a psychic personality that he possesses. Now this flowering of the psychic personality is due to an especial Descent, the descent of a Person from another level of consciousness. That Person (or Superperson) is the *jivatman*, the Individual Self, the central being of each individual formation. The Jivas are centres of multiplicity thrown up in the bosom of the infinite Consciousness: it is the supreme Consciousness eddying in unit formations to serve as the basis for the play of manifestation. They are not within the frame of manifestation (as the typical formations in the Supermind are), they are above or beyond or beside it and stand there eternally and invariably in and as part and parcel of the one supreme Reality—Sachchidananda. But the Jivatman from its own status casts its projection, representation, delegated formulation—"emanation," in the phraseology of the neo-Platonists—into the manifestation of the triple complex of mind, life and body, that is to say, into the human vehicle, and thus stands behind as the psychic personality or the soul. This soul, we have seen, is a developing, organising focus of consciousness growing from below and comes to its own in the human being: or we can put it the other way, that is to say, when it comes to its own, then the human being appears. And it has come to its own precisely by a descent of its own self from above, in the same manner as with the other descents already described. Now, this "coming to its own"

means that it begins henceforth to exercise its royal power, its natural and inherent divine right, viz, of consciously and directly controlling and organising its terrestrial kingdom which is the body and life and mind. The exercise of conscious directive will, supported and illumined by a self-consciousness, that occurs with the advent of the Mind is a function of the Purusha, the self-conscious being, in the Mind; but this self-conscious being has been able to come up, manifest itself and be active, because of pressure of the underlying psychic personality that has formed here.

Thus we have three characteristics of the human personality accruing from the psychic consciousness that supports and inspires it:—(1) self-consciousness: an animal acts, feels and even knows, but man knows that he acts, knows that he feels, knows even that he knows. This phenomenon of consciousness turning round upon itself is the hallmark of the human being; (2) a conscious will holding together and harmonising, fashioning and integrating the whole external nature evolved till now; (3) a purposive drive, a deliberate and voluntary orientation towards a higher and ever higher status of individualisation and personalisation,—not only a horizontal movement seeking to embrace and organise the normal, the already attained level of consciousness, but also a vertical movement seeking to raise the level, attain altogether a new poise of higher organisation.

These characters, it is true, are not clear and pronounced, do not lie in front, at the beginning of the human personality. The normal human person has his psyche very much behind; but it is still there as *antaryāmin*, as the secret Inner Controller. And whatever the vagaries of the outer instruments or their slavery to the mode of Ignorance, in and through all that, it is this Inner Guide that holds the reins and drives upward in the end.

Thus naturally there appear gradations of the human personality; as the consciousness in the human being rises higher and higher, the psychic centre organises a higher and higher—a richer, wider, deeper—personality. The first great conversion, the first turning of the human personality to a new mode of life and living, that is to say, living even externally according to the inner truth and reality, the first attempt at a

conscious harmonisation of the psychic consciousness with its surface agents and vehicles, is what is known as spiritual initiation. This may happen and it does happen even when man lives in his normal mental consciousness. But there is the possibility of growth and evolution and transformation of personality in higher and higher spiritual degrees through the upper reaches of the higher Mind, the varying degrees of the Overmind and finally the Supermind. These are the spheres, the fields, even the continents of the personality, but the stuff, the substance of the personality, the inner nucleus of consciousness-force is formed, first, by the flaming aspiration, the upward drive within the developing and increasing psychic being itself, and secondly, by the descent, to a greater and greater degree, of the original Being from which it emanated. The final coalescence of the fully and integrally developed psychic being with the supreme splendour of its very source, the Jivatman, occurs in the Supermind. When this happens the supramental personality becomes incarnate in the physical body: Matter in the material plane is transformed into a radiant substance made of pure consciousness, the human personality becomes a living form of the Divine. Thus the wheel comes full circle: creation returns to the point from which it started but with an added significance, a new fulfilment.

The mystery of rebirth in the evolution of the human personality is nothing but the mystery of the developing psyche. At first this psyche or soul is truly a being: "no bigger than the thumb"—it is the hardly audible "still small voice". The experiences of life—sweet or bitter, happy or unhappy, good or bad, howsoever they may appear to the outward eye and perception—all the dialectics of a terrestrial existence contribute to the growth and development of the psychic consciousness. Each span of life means a special degree or mode of growth necessitated by the inner demand and drive of the divine Individual seated within the heart. The whole end in view of this secret soul is to move always towards and be united again with its Oversoul, its original and high archetype in the Divine Consciousness: the entire course of its earthly evolution is chalked out and patterned by the exact need of its growth. Whatever happens in each particular life, all the

currents of all the lives converge and coalesce, and serve the psychic consciousness to swell in volume and intensity and be one with the Divine Consciousness. Or, in a different imagery, one can say that the multifarious experiences of various lives are as fuel to the Inner Fire—this Psychic Agni which is just a spark or a thin tongue at the outset of the human evolutionary course; but with the addition of fuel from life to life this Fire flames up, indeed, becomes ultimately a conflagration that burns and purifies the entire outer vehicle and transforms it into radiant matter—a fit receptacle, incarnation of the supernal Light. The mounting Fire (the consciousness-energy secreted in the earth-bound heart of Matter) finally flares up, discloses itself in its full amplitude and calls and attracts into it the incandescent supramental Solar Sphere which is the type and pattern it has to embody and express. This is the marriage of Heaven and Earth, of which the mystics all over the earth in all ages spoke and sang—to which the Vedic Rishi refers when he declares:

*Dyaus me pitā mātā pṛthivī iyaṃ.*¹

The supramentalisation of the personality which means the perfect divinisation of the personality, is yet not the final end of Nature's march. Her path is endless, since she follows the trail of infinity. There are still higher modes of consciousness, or, if they cannot properly be called higher, other modes of consciousness that lie in waiting to be brought out and placed and established in the front of terrestrial evolution. Only, supramentalisation means the definite crossing over from Ignorance, from every trace and shadow of Ignorance, into the abiding and perennial Knowledge and Freedom. Thenceforward the course of Nature's evolution may be more of the kind of expression than ascension; for, beyond the Supermind it is very difficult to speak of a higher or lower order of consciousness. Everything thereafter is in the full perfect light—the difference comes in the mode or manner or stress of expression. However, that is a problem with which we are not immediately concerned.

We have spoken of four lines of Descent in the evolution

¹ The Heaven is my Father and this Earth my Mother.

and organisation of consciousness. There yet remains a fifth line. It is more occult. It is really the secret of secrets, the *Supreme Secret*. It is the descent of the Divine himself. The Divine, the supreme Person himself descends, not indirectly through emanations, projections, partial or lesser formulations, but directly in his own plenary self. He descends not as a disembodied force acting as a general movement, possessing, at the most, other objects and persons as its medium or instrument, but in an embodied form and in the fullness of his consciousness. The Indian word for Divine Incarnation, *avatāra*, literally means *he who has descended*. The Divine comes down himself as a terrestrial being, on this material plane of ours, in order to raise the terrestrial and material Nature to a new status in her evolutionary course—even so He incarnated as the Great Boar who, with his mighty tusk, lifted a solid mass of earth from out of the waters of the Deluge. It is his purpose to effect an ascension of consciousness, a transmutation of being, to establish a truly New Order, a New Dharma, as it is termed—*dharmasamsthāpanārthāya*. On the human level he appears as a human person—for two purposes. First of all, he shows, by example, how the ascension, the transmutation is to be effected, how a normal human being can rise from a lower status of consciousness to a higher one. The Divine is therefore known as the Lord of Yoga—for Yoga is the means and method by which one consciously uplifts oneself, unites oneself with the Higher Reality. The embodied Divine is the ideal and pattern: he shows the path, himself walks the path and man can follow, if he chooses. The Biblical conception of the Son of God—God made flesh—as the intermediary between the human and the Divine, declaring, “I am the Way and the Goal”, expresses a very similar truth. The Divine takes a body for another—occult—reason also. It is this: Matter or terrestrial life cannot be changed—changed radically, that is to say, *transformed*—by the pure spiritual consciousness alone, lying above or within; also it is not sufficient to bring about only that much of change in terrestrial life which can be effected by the mere spiritual force acting in a general way. It looks as if the physical transformation which is what is meant by an ascension or emergence in the evolutionary gradient were possible only by a physical impact embodying

and canalising the spiritual force: it is with his physical body that the Divine Incarnation seems to push and lift up physical Nature to a new and higher status.

The occult seers declare that we are today on the earth at such a crisis of evolution. Earth and Man and man's earthly life need to be radically transfigured. The trouble and turbulence, the chaos and confusion that are now overwhelming this earth, indicate the acute tension before the release, the *détente* of a NEW MANIFESTATION.

An Aspect of Emergent Evolution

THE theory of Emergent Evolution should be considered no longer as a theory, but as a statement of fact. The fact, at its barest, stripped of all assumptions and even generalisations, is the fact observed and implicit in all evolution, which can be denied only by the perverse and purblind. It is this, that at each crucial step Nature undergoes a sudden and total change, brings forth a new element which was not there before and which could not be foreseen or foretold by any process of deduction from the actual factors in play.

At the very outset of the evolutionary march, when material Nature meant only a mass or masses of incandescent gaseous elements, the first miracle that happened was the formation, the advent of water. There was Hydrogen and there was Oxygen existing and moving side by side, for millions of years perhaps, but only at a given moment did an electric current happen to pass through a certain mixture of the two elements somewhere, and behold, a liquid drop was the product, an absolutely new, unforeseen, unpredictable and wonderful object! Examples can be multiplied.

The fact is admitted, on the whole, unless one is a Fundamentalist and prefers still to live in the consciousness of a bygone century. Difference comes in when the question of explanations and of viewpoints regarding them is raised. A materialist like Professor Broad would consider Mind and Life as fundamentally formations of Matter, however different they might seem from each other and from the latter. Water, the so-called miracle product of Oxygen and Hydrogen, according to him, is as material as these two; even so Life and Mind, however miraculously produced, being born of Matter, are nothing but the same single reality, only in different

forms. Others, who are more or less idealists, Alexander and Lloyd Morgan, for example (some of them call themselves neo-realists, however), would not view the phenomenon in the same way. Alexander says that Matter and Life and Mind are very different from each other; they are truly emergents, that is to say, novelties; but how the thing has been possible, one need not inquire; one should accept the fact with "natural piety."

Morgan proffers an explanation. He says that whatever there is, exists in God who is the all-continent. In fact, everything that is or was or shall be is in Him. And the evolutionary gradation expresses or puts in front, one by one, all the principles or types of existence that God holds in Himself. The explanation hardly explains. It simply posits the existence of Matter and Life and Mind and whatever is to come hereafter in the infinity of God, but the passage from one to another, the connecting link between two succeeding terms, and the necessity of the link, are left as obscure as before. Life is tagged on to Matter and Mind is tagged on to Life in the name of the Lord God.

Bertrand Russell made a move in the right direction with a happy suggestion which unhappily he had not the courage to follow up. Mind (and Life), he says, are certainly emergents out of Matter; that is because the reality is neither, it is a neutral stuff out of which all emergents issue. The conclusion is logical and sensible. But as he was initially bound to his position of scientific scepticism, he could not further question or probe the "neutral" and stopped on the fence.

The problem in reality, however, is simple enough, if we allow the facts to speak for themselves and do not hesitate to accept the conclusions to which they inevitably lead. After Matter came Life; that is to say, out of Matter came Life, and that can only be because Life was involved in Matter. And if such a conclusion makes of Matter a potentially living thing, we shall have to accept the position. In the same way, Mind that followed Life came out of Life, because Mind was involved in Life; and if that means endowing Life with a secret mentality, well, there is no help for it. And if, as a natural consequence of the two premises we have to admit the existence of some kind of mind or consciousness secreted in Matter

—a minimal psychic life, according to McDougall—that would be but what the Upanishads always declared: Creation is a vibration of consciousness, and all things and all kinds of existence are only forms and modalities of consciousness.

However, we thus arrive at Mind in following the evolutionary process. Now after Mind there emerges another principle which has been termed Deity. By Deity the emergent evolutionists mean the embodiment of the religious feeling—piety, charity, worship, love of God or of God's creatures. Indeed, saints and prophets are visible deities, embodiments of the Deity in the making. These represent another element in the evolutionary process—a new evolute.

Does this point to the emergence of a new type of super-human beings forming a class or a species by themselves? The possibility has been envisaged by some of the protagonists of emergent evolution, but has not been sufficiently examined or considered. Philosophers seem to walk in this region with caution and incertitude, as if on quicksand and quagmire. But in this connection we are faced with a problem which Morgan had the happy intuition to seize and to bring forward. It is our purpose to draw attention to this matter.

Professor Alexander spoke of the emergence of deities who would embody emergent properties other than those manifest in the Mind of man. Morgan asks whether there is not also a Deity—or *the* Deity—in the making. He establishes the logical necessity of such a consummation in this way: the evolutionary urge (or *nisus*, as it has been called) in its upward drive creates and throws up on all sides, at each stage, forms of the new property or principle of existence that has come into evidence. These multiple forms may appear anywhere and everywhere; they are strewn about on the entire surface of Nature. These are, however, the branchings of the evolutionary *nisus* which has a central line of advance running through the entire gradation of emergents; it is, as it were, the central pillar round which is erected a many-storeyed edifice. The interesting point is this, that at the present stage of emergence, what the central line touches and arrives at is the Deity. Or, again, the thing can be viewed in another way. At the bottom the evolutionary movement is broad-based on Matter but as it proceeds upward its extent is gradually narrowed down;

Life is less extensive than Matter and Mind is still less extensive than Life. Thus the scheme of the movement can be figured as a pyramid—the base of the pyramid represents Matter, but the apex where the narrowing sides converge is what is called the Deity.

What is the implication of such a conclusion? It comes perilously near the Indian conception of Avatarhood! The central line of evolutionary *nisus* is the line of Avatarhood. At each point of the line, on the level of the newly emerged principle, there is a divine embodiment of that principle. The esoteric significance of the graded scale of Avatarhood, as illustrated in Vishnu's ten Forms, has long ago been pointed out, by some thinkers, in this light.

The principle of Avatarhood stands justified in this scheme as a necessary and inevitable element in the terrestrial evolutionary movement. An Avatar embodies a new emergent property: he incarnates a new principle of being and consciousness, he manifests—unfolds from below or brings down from above upon earth—a higher and deeper principle of organisation. He is the nucleus round which the new organisation crystallises. A Rama comes and human society attains a new status: against a mainly vitalistic and egoistic organisation whose defender and protagonist is Ravana, is set up an ideal of *sattwic* humanity. A Krishna appears and human consciousness is lifted, potentially at least, to a still higher level of spiritual possibility. The Avatar following, rather tracing, in his upward movement the central line of the evolutionary *nisus*, cuts a path, as it were, in the virgin forest of a realm of consciousness still unknown and foreign to human steps. As the Avatar presses and passes on, the way is cleared for other, ordinary human beings to come up and naturalise themselves in a new country promising a higher destiny which He discovers and conquers—for them.

Now at this point we reach the crux of the problem, the supreme secret—*rahasyam uttamam*—as the Gita would say. For the apex of the pyramid, the crown of evolution, the consummation of the central line of emergence would then be nothing less than the manifestation, the terrestrial incarnation of the Supreme Divine. The Deity thus fully emerged would embody the truth and play of creation in its widest scope and

highest elevation; it would mean the utter fulfilment of human destiny and terrestrial Purpose.

In Indian terminology, it would be the advent of the Purna Bhagavan in the human body—*mānusiṃ tanumāsritam*. All previous Avatars are only a preparation for the coming of this Supreme Divine. It is said also that the present epoch marks a crucial turn and transition. We await the Kalki Avatar who will wipe off the past, the Iron Age, and bring in the Golden Age, Satya Yuga.

A question inevitably arises here—what next? Once the evolutionary movement has reached the apex, does it stop there? After the apex, the Void? It need not be so. The completion of the pyramid would mean simply the end of a particular order of creation, the creation in Ignorance. This is, indeed, what Sri Aurobindo envisages in his conception of the creation in supramental Gnosis. The evolutionary nīsus, on its arrival at the apex, according to him crosses a borderland, leaps into another order of the world, of infinite Truth-Consciousness. Thereafter another new creation starts, the building perhaps of another pyramid (if we want to continue the metaphor). The progression of the evolutionary course is naturally expected to be an unending series. The pyramids rise tier upon tier *ad infinitum*. Only it is to be noted that in the basic pyramid the evolution starts from inconscience and moves from more ignorance to less ignorance through a gradually lessening density of darkness until the apex is reached where all shade of darkness is eliminated for ever. Beyond there is no mixture, however thin and diluted: it is a movement from light to light, from one expression of it to another, perhaps richer, but of the same quality.

This, however, is an aspect of the problem with which we are not immediately concerned. There is one question with which we have omitted to deal but which is nearer to us and touches present actualities. We spoke of the emergence of the Deity—and of the Supreme Deity—*after* Mind. The question is, how long after? I do not refer to the duration of time needed, but to the steps or the stages that have to be passed. For between Mind and Deity, certainly between Mind and the Supreme Deity (Purushottama, as we would say), there may presumably still lie a course of graded emergence. In fact, Sri

Aurobindo speaks of the Overmind and the Supermind, as farther steps of the evolutionary progress coming after Mind. He says that Mind closes the interior hemisphere of man's nature and consciousness; with Overmind man enters into the higher sphere of the Spirit. In this view, the religious feeling or perception or conduct would be but an intermediary stage between Mind and Overmind. They are not really emergent properties, but reflections, faint echoes and promises of what is to come, mixed up with attributes of the present mentality. The Overmind brings in a true emergence.

Still Overmind—whose characteristic is a cosmic consciousness and a transcendence of all ego-sense—is not the firm basis on which a new terrestrial organisation can stand and endure. It is still a basis of unstable equilibrium. For it is not the supernal light and, although it transcends all ignorance, yet does not possess that absolute synthetic unity, that transcendent power of consciousness which is at once the cosmic and the individual. That is the domain of the Supermind.

The whole urge of evolutionary Nature today is to bring out first the Overmental principle and then through it the Supramental which will establish and fix upon earth the principle of Deity and the Supreme Divine.

PART THREE

The New Year Initiation

1944

O Lord, the world implores Thee to prevent it from falling back always into the same stupidities.

Grant that the mistakes recognised may never be renewed.

Grant, lastly, that its actions may be the exact and sincere expression of its proclaimed ideals.

—THE MOTHER

1

THIS is the New Year Prayer the Mother has formulated for our sake. This is the turn She would have us give to our sadhana for the year. What is the special import of this new orientation? It is, one may say, to direct our efforts towards an objective expression, towards an application to life on the material plane.

One starts on the path of sadhana with an almost entire unconsciousness—it is so in all evolutionary process. A goal is there, vague and indistinct, far off. Within him also the sadhaka feels an equally indefinite and indefinable urge, he seems to move without any fixed aim or purpose, with an urge simply to move and move on. This is what he feels as a yearning, as an aspiration—*caraivete*, as the Upanishad says. Then step by step as he progresses, his consciousness grows luminous, the aim also begins to take a clear and definite shape. The mind is able slowly to understand and grasp what it wants, the heart's yearning and attraction also begin to be transparent, quiet but deep. Still this cannot be called a change of nature, let alone transformation. Then only will our nature consent really to change when we become, when even our sense-organs become subject to our inner consciousness, when

our actions and activities are inspired, guided and formed by the power and influence of this inner light.

In the beginning, the sadhaka finds himself a divided personality—in his heart there is the awakening of aspiration, the divine touch, but with all its outward impulses, the physical consciousness remains subject to the control of old fixed habits under the sway of the lower nature. Ordinarily, man is an unconscious sinner, that is to say, he has no sense of the sins he commits. But he becomes a conscious sinner when he reaches the level of which we are speaking. The conflicts, fears, agonies, compunctions in this stage have perhaps been nowhere more evident than in the life of the Christian seeker. In this state we know what to do but cannot do it—the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We want to do the right thing, we try to do it again and again, yet we fail every time. It is not that we fail only in respect of the movements of our heart and mind, in practice also we commit the same stupidities time and again. These stupidities—and their name is legion—are lust, anger, greed, ignorance, vanity, envy, distrust, disobedience, revolt; repentance, constant repentance and earnest supplication for the divine grace—that is the remedy, says the devout Christian.

But we, for ourselves, do not give any such supreme place to repentance. For, after all, it is a lower impulse, a vital impulse as we call it; it does not allow the memory of the sin to be forgotten; rather by dwelling upon it constantly, it keeps it alive, makes the impression of the sin all the more lurid. And not unoften does it lead to luxuriating in sinfulness. Behind the sense of repentance is this consciousness, this idea that man is, by nature, corrupt, his sin is original. That is why the Christian seeker has accepted sorrow and suffering, abasement and mortification as the indispensable conditions of his sadhana. This calls to our mind a witty remark of Anatole France, that prince of humorists, that one could not be a lover of Christ unless one sinned—the more one sinned, the more could one grow in righteousness; the more the repentance, in other words, the more the divine grace.

We have said that this is not our path. The divine grace is a fact—without that nothing is possible. From one point of view, the divine grace is unconditioned. But it does not follow

that the precedent of Jagai-Madhai is the invariable law of spiritual life. The law is rather this that the field must be ready, the being and the consciousness must get into a certain mould, attain certain order and disposition so that the descent of the Divine Grace, its manifestation and play may be possible. For, just as the divine grace is true, so it is equally true that the individual is essentially one with the Divine, sin and ignorance are his external sloughs, identity with the Divine is his natural right. We, therefore, lay equal stress on this hidden aspect of man, on the freedom of his will, on his personal effort which is the determining factor of his destiny. For in the field of ignorance or half-knowledge, in the nether hemisphere of his consciousness, it is this power that directly builds up that ordered state of the being with whose support the divine grace can actualise itself and give a material shape to the integral fulfilment.

Hence the Mother gives the direction that though external lapses may be natural to our external nature, now that our inner consciousness has awakened, the vision and the earnestness to see and recognise our mistakes have developed—assuming that this much of development has taken place in us—we must awake to the situation and be on the alert, we must bring such control to bear upon our vital impulses, upon our nervous centres as will prevent, for good and all, errors and stupidities from upsurging again and invading our physical self and our field of action. When we have reached this stage, we have acquired the capacity to ascend to another level of consciousness. It is then that we can lay the foundations of a new order in the world—it is then that along with the purification the achievement will begin to take on a material form.

2

The scope of this New Year Prayer does not limit itself only to our individual sadhana—it embraces also the collective consciousness which is specially the field of its application. It is the muffled voice of entire humanity in its secret aspiration that is given expression here. It is by the power of this *mantra*, protected by this invulnerable armour,—if we choose to

accept it as such,—that the collective life of man will attain its fulfilment. We have often stated that the outstanding feature of the modern world is that it has become a Kurukshetra of Gods and Titans. It is no doubt an eternal truth of creation, this conflict between the divine and the anti-divine, and it has been going on in the heart of humanity since its advent upon earth. In the inner life of the world this is a fact of the utmost importance, its most significant principle and mystery. Still it must be said that never in the annals of the physical world has this truth taken such momentous proportions as in the grim present. It is pregnant with all good and evil that may make or mar human destiny in the near future. Whether man will transcend his half-animal state and rise to the full height of his manhood, nay even to the godhead in him, or descend back to the level of his gross brute nature—this is the problem of problems which is being dealt with and solved in the course of the mighty holocaust of the present World War.

In her last year's message¹ the Mother gave a clear warning that we must have no more hesitation, that we must renounce one side, free ourselves from all its influence and embrace the other side without hesitation, without reservation. At the decisive moment in the life of the world and of mankind, one must definitely, irrevocably choose one's loyalty. It will not do to say, like the over-wise and the over-liberal, that both sides—the Allies and the Axis Powers—are equal—equally right or equally wrong—and that we can afford to be outside or above the prejudices or interests of either. There is no room today for a neutral. He who pretends to be a neutral is an enemy to the cause of truth. Whoever is not with us is against us.

We who have taken the side that is for Light and Evolution and the great Future, must be thoroughly alive to the heavy responsibility that lies on us. The choice of the path is not by itself sufficient. Next to that, we have to see, at every step, and make sure that we are really walking straight along the true path, that we do not fall and slip down, that we do not stray unawares into a wrong track or a blind alley.

¹ 'The hour has come when a choice has to be made, radical and definitive. Lord, give us the strength to reject the falsehood and emerge in Thy truth, pure and worthy of Thy victory.'—1943

So far as the World War is concerned all nations and peoples and groups on our side who have felt and proclaimed that they stand for equality, fraternity and freedom, the priests and prophets of a new future, of a happier humanity, all such warriors are also facing a solemn ordeal. For them also the time has come to be on their guard and be watchful. They must see that they give exact expression in their actions to what they have thought, felt and proclaimed. They have to prove by every means, by thought, word and deed, that their entire being is really one, whole and indivisible, in ideal and in intention.

Today at the beginning of the New Year we have to bear in mind what aim, what purpose inspired us to enter into this tremendous "terrible work", what force, what strength has been leading us to victory. They who consider themselves as collaborators in the progressive evolution of Nature must constantly realise the truth that if victory has come within the range of possibility, it has done so in just proportion to their sincerity, by the magic grace of the Mahashakti, the grace which the aspiration of their inner consciousness has called down. And what is now but possible will grow into the actual if we keep moving along the path we have so far followed. Otherwise, if we falter, fail and break faith, if we relapse into the old accustomed track, if under pressure of past habits, under the temptation of immediate selfish gain, under the sway of narrow parochial egoism, we suppress or maim the wider consciousness of our inner being or deny it in one way or another, then surely we shall wheel back and fall into the clutches of those very hostile powers which it has been our determined effort to overthrow. Even if we gain an outward victory it will be a disastrous, moral and spiritual defeat. That will mean a tragic reversal—to be compelled to begin again from the very beginning. Nature will not be baulked of her aim. Another travail she will have to undergo and that will be far more agonising and terrible.

But we do not expect such a catastrophe. We have hope and confidence that the secret urge of Nature, the force of the Mahashakti will save man, individually and collectively, from ignorance and foolishness, vouchsafe to him genuine good sense and the true inspiration.

Yogic Initiation and Aptitude

IN the practice of Yoga a condition precedent is usually laid down: it is called *adhikāra*, aptitude, fitness or capacity. Everybody does not possess this aptitude, it is urged, and cannot take to a life of Yoga at one's sweet will. There must be a preparation, certain rules and regulations must be observed, some discipline must be followed and one must acquire certain qualities or qualifications, must reach a particular stage and degree, rise to a particular level of life and consciousness before one can successfully face the spiritual problem. It is not everyone that has a *laissez-passer*, a free pass to enter the city or citadel of the spirit.

The Upanishad gives the warning in most emphatic terms:

"This Atman is not to be gained by the weakling"¹ and again it declared:

"Nor to the fickle and the unsteady should this knowledge be given"² and yet again:

"Nor can one attain the Spirit by discussion and disputation, nor by a varied learning nor even by the power of intelligence."³

Shankara, at the very outset of his commentary on the Sūtras, in explaining the very first words, speaks of a fourfold *sadhana* to acquire fitness—fitness, we may take it, for understanding the Sūtras and the commentary and naturally for attaining the Brahman. It seems therefore to be an absolute condition that one must first acquire fitness, develop the right and adequate capacity before one should think of spiritual initiation.

The question, however, can be raised—the moderns do

¹ *Mundaka*, III. 2. 4

² *Swetasvatara*, VI. 22

³ *Katha*, I. 2. 23

raise it and naturally in the present age of science and universal education—why should not all men equally have the right to spiritual sadhana? If spirituality is the highest truth for man, his greatest good, his supreme ideal, then to deny it to anyone on the ground, for example, of his not being of the right caste, class, creed, or sex, to keep anyone at a distance on such or similar grounds is unreasonable, unjust, reprehensible. These notions, however, are born of a sentimental or idealistic or charitable disposition, but unfortunately they do not stand the impact of the realities of life. If you simply claim a thing or even if you possess a lawful right to a worthy object, you do not acquire thereby the capacity to enjoy it. Were it so, there would be no such thing as mal-assimilation. In the domain of spiritual sadhana there are any number of cases of defective metabolism. Those that have fallen, strayed from the Path, become deranged or even have had to leave the body, make up a casualty list that is not small. They were misfits, they came by their fate, because they encroached upon a thing they were not actually entitled to, they were dragged into a secret, a mystery to which their being was insensible.

In a general way we may perhaps say, without gross error, that every man has the right to become a poet, a scientist or a politician. But when the question rises in respect of a particular person, then it has to be seen whether that person has a natural ability, an inherent tendency or aptitude for the special training so necessary for the end in view. One cannot, at will, develop into a poet by sheer effort or culture. He alone can be a poet who is to the manner born. The same is true also of the spiritual life. But in this case, there is something more to take into account. If you enter the spiritual path, often, whether you will or not, you come in touch with hidden powers, supra-sensible forces, beings of other worlds and you do not know how to deal with them. You raise ghosts and spirits, demons and gods—Frankenstein monsters that are easily called up but not so easily laid. You break down under their impact, unless your *ādhāra* has already been prepared, purified and strengthened. Now, in secular matters, when, for example, you have the ambition to be a poet, you can try and fail, fail with impunity. But if you undertake the

spiritual life and fail, then you lose both here and hereafter. That is why the Vedic Rishis used to say that the earthen vessel meant to hold the Soma must be properly baked and made perfectly sound. It was for this reason again that among the ancients, in all climes and in all disciplines, definite rules and regulations were laid down to test the aptitude or fitness of an aspirant. These tests were of different kinds, varying according to the age, the country and the Path followed—from the capacity for gross physical labour to that for subtle perception. A familiar instance of such a test is found in the story of the aspirant who was asked again and again, for years together, by his Teacher to go and graze cows. A modern mind stares at the irrelevancy of the procedure; for what on earth, he would question, has spiritual sadhana to do with cow-grazing? In defence we need not go into any esoteric significance, but simply suggest that this was perhaps a test for obedience and endurance. These two are fundamental and indispensable conditions in sadhana; without them there is no spiritual practice, one cannot advance a step. It is absolutely necessary that one should carry out the directions of the Guru without question or complaint, with full happiness and alacrity: even if there comes no immediate gain one must continue with the same zeal, not giving way to impatience or depression. In ancient Egypt among certain religious orders there was another kind of test. The aspirant was kept confined in a solitary room, sitting in front of a design or diagram, a mystic symbol (*cakra*) drawn on the wall. He had to concentrate and meditate on that figure hour after hour, day after day till he could discover its meaning. If he failed he was declared unfit.

Needless to say that these tests and ordeals are mere externals; at any rate, they have no place in our sadhana. Such or similar virtues many people possess or may possess, but that is no indication that they have an opening to the true spiritual life, to the life divine that we seek. Just as accomplishments on the mental plane,—keen intellect, wide studies, profound scholarship even in the scriptures do not entitle a man to the possession of the spirit, even so capacities on the vital plane,—mere self-control, patience and forbearance or endurance and perseverance do not create a claim to spiritual

realisation, let alone physical austerities. In conformity with the Upanishadic standard, one may not be an unworthy son or an unworthy disciple, one may be strong, courageous, patient, calm, self-possessed, one may even be a consummate master of the senses and be endowed with other great virtues. Yet all this is no assurance of one's success in spiritual sadhana. Even one may be, after Shankara, a *mumukṣu*, that is to say, have an ardent yearning for liberation. Still it is doubtful if that alone can give him liberation into the divine life.

What then is the indispensable and unfailing requisite? What is it that gives you the right of entrance into the divine life? What is the element, the factor in you that acts as the "open sesame", as a magic solvent?

Only one thing, represented by one small homely word—"Call". Whatever may be the case with other paths of sadhana, for Sri Aurobindo's Path this is the keynote. Has the call come to you, have you received the call? That is everything. If you have this call it does not matter in the least whether you have other qualities, be they good, be they bad. That serves as proof and pointer that you are meant for this Path. If you have this one thing needful you have everything, and if you have it not, you have nothing, absolutely nothing. You may be wise beyond measure, your virtues and austerities may be incalculable, yet if you lack this, you lack the fitness for Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. On the other hand, if you have no virtues worth the name, if you are uneducated or ill-educated, if you are weak and miserable, if your nature is full of flaws and lapses, yet if the call is there in you secreted somewhere, then all else will come to you, will be called in as it were inevitably: riches and strengths will grow and develop in you, you will transcend all obstacles and dangers, all your wants will be made good, all your wear and tear will be whole. In the words of the Upanishad: "Sin will not be able to traverse you, you will traverse all sin, sin will not burn you, you will burn it away."¹

Now what exactly is this wonderful thing? This power that brings into being the non-being, realises the impossible? Whose is this Call, from where does it come? It is none other than the call of your own inmost being, of your secret self. It

¹ *Bṛihadaranyaka*, IV. 2. 23

is the categorical imperative of the Divine seated within your heart. Indeed, the first dawning of the spiritual life means the coming forward, the unveiling of this inner being. The ignorant and animal life of man persists so long as the inner being remains in the background, away from the dynamic life, so long as man is subject to the needs and impulses of his mind and life and body. True, through the demands and urges of this lower complex, it is always the inner being that gains and has its dictates carried out and is always the secret lord and enjoyer; but that is an indirect effect and it is a phenomenon that takes place behind the veil. The evolution, in other words, of the inner or psychic being proceeds through many and diverse experiences—mental, vital and physical. Its consciousness, on the one hand, grows, that is, enlarges itself, becomes wider and wider, from what was infinitesimal it moves towards infinity, and on the other, strengthens, intensifies itself, comes up from behind and takes its stand in front visibly and dynamically. Man's true individual being starts on its career of evolution as a tiny focus of consciousness totally submerged under the huge surface surge of mind and life and body consciousness. It stores up in itself and assimilates the essence of the various experiences that the mind and life and body bring to it in its unending series of incarnations; as it enriches itself thus, it increases in substance and potency, even like fire that feeds upon fuels. A time comes when the pressure of the developed inner being upon the mind and life and body becomes so great that they begin to lose their aboriginal and unregenerate freedom—the freedom of doing as they like; they have now to pause in their unreflecting career, turn round, as it were, and imbibe and acquire the habit of listening to the deeper, the inner voice, and obey the direction, the command of the Call. This is the “Word inviolate” (*anāhata-vānī*) of which the sages speak; this is also referred to as the “still small voice”, for indeed it is scarcely audible at present amidst the din and clamour of the wild surges of the body and life and mind consciousness.

Now, when this call comes clear and distinct, there is no other way for the man than to cut off the old moorings and jump into the shoreless unknown. It is the categorical demand

of such an overwhelming experience that made the Indian aspirant declare:

“The moment you feel you are not of the world, loiter no longer in it.”

It is the same experience that throbs in the Christ’s utterance:

“Follow me, let the dead bury their dead.”

The inner soul—the psychic—very often undergoes a secret preparation, develops and comes forward but just waits, as it were, behind the thin though opaque screen; and because of that it gives no objective indication of its growth and readiness. We see no patent sign of what is usually known as fitness or aptitude or capacity. Otherwise how to explain the conversion of a profligate and dilettante like Augustine, or of a rebel like Paul, or of scamps like Jagai-Madhai. Often the purest gold hides in the basest ore, the diamond is coal turned, as it were, inside out. This, one would say, is the Divine Grace that blows where it lists—makes of the dumb a prattler, of the lame a mountain-climber. Yet, but what is this Divine Grace and how does it move and act? It does not act on all and sundry, it does not act on all equally. What is the reason? Appearances often belie the reality: a contrary mask is put on, it would appear, deliberately, with a set purpose. The sense and significance of this mystery? The hard, obscure, obstinate, rebel outer crust may continue long but it is corroded from within and one day, all on a sudden, it crumbles and dissolves and becomes in a new avatar the vehicle and receptacle of the very thing it opposed and denied.

Virtues are not indications of the fire of the inner soul, nor are vices irremediable obstacles to its growth. The inner soul, we have said, feeds upon all—it is indeed fire, the omnivorous *sarvabhuk*,—virtues and vices and everything else and gather strength from everywhere. The mystery of miracles, of a sudden change or reversal or revolution in consciousness and way of life lies in the omnipotency of the psychic being. The psychic being has the power of making the apparently impossible, for this reason that it is a portion of the almighty

Divine, it is the supreme Conscious-Power crystallised and canalised in a centre for the sake of manifestation. It is a particle from the Being, a spark of the Consciousness, a ripple from the Delight cast into the fastnesses of Matter and the material body. Now, it is the irresistible urge of this particle, this spark, this ripple to grow and expand, to become in the end the Vast—the Ocean and the Sun and the sphere of Infinity—to become that not merely in an essential status but in a dynamic and apparent becoming also. The little soul, originally no bigger than a thumb, goes forward through one life after another enlarging and intensifying itself till it recovers and establishes its parent reality in this material body here below, till it unveils what is latent within itself, what is its own, what is itself,—its integral self-fulfilment, the Divine integrality.

Here in his inner being, as part and parcel of the Divine, man is absolutely free, has infinite capacity and unbounded aptitude; for here he is master, not slave of Nature, and it is slavery to Nature, that limits and baulks and stultifies man. So does the Upanishad declare in a magnificent and supreme utterance:

“It is he in whom the soul, sunk in the impenetrable cavern of the body, darkened by dualities, has awakened and become vigilant, he it is who is the master of the universe and the master of all, yea, his is this world, he is this world.”¹

In the practice of Yoga the fitness or capacity that the inner being thus lends is the only real capacity that a sadhaka possesses; and the natural, spontaneous, self-sufficing initiation deriving from the inner being is the only initiation that is valid and fruitful. Initiation does not mean necessarily an external rite or ceremony, a *mantra*, an auspicious day or moment: all these things are useless and irrelevant once we take our stand on the authentic self-competence of the soul. The moment the inner being has taken the decision that this time, in this life, in this very body, it will manifest itself, take possession of the body and life and mind and wait no more, at that moment itself all *mantra* has been uttered and all

¹ *Brihadaranyaka*, IV. 4. 13

initiation taken. The disciple has made the final and definitive offering of his heart to his Guru—the psychic Guru—and sought refuge in him and the Guru too has definitely accepted him.

Mantra or initiation, in its essence, is nothing else than contacting the inner being. In our Path, at least, there is no other rite or rule, injunction or ceremony. The only thing needed is to awake to the consciousness of the psychic being, to hear its call—to live and move and act every moment of our life under the eye of this indwelling Guide, in accordance with its direction and impulsion. Our initiation is not therefore a one-time affair only; but at every moment, at each step, it has to be taken again and again, it must be renewed, revitalised, furthered and strengthened constantly and unceasingly; for it means that at each step and at every moment we have to maintain the contact of our external consciousness with the inner being; at each step and every moment we have to undergo the test of our sincerity and loyalty—the test whether we are tending to our inner being, moving in its stream or, on the contrary, walking the way of our external animal nature, whether the movements in the mind and life and body are controlled by their habitual inferior nature or are open to and unified with their hidden divine source. This recurrent and continuous initiation is at the secret basis of all spiritual discipline—in the Integral Yoga this is the one and all-important principle.

Arjuna or The Ideal Disciple

WHAT makes a true disciple? For it is not everyone that can claim or be worthy of or meet the demands of the title. Disciplehood, like all great qualities, that is to say, qualities taken at their source and origin, is a function of the soul. Indeed, it is the soul itself coming up and asking for its native divine status; it is the call of the immortal in the mortal, the voice of the inmost being rising above the clamours and lures of the world, above the hungers and ties of one's own nature. When that rings out clear and unmistakable, the Divine reveals Himself as the Guru, the Path is shown and the initiation given. Even such a cry was Arjuna's when he said: *śiṣyaste'ham sādhi mām twam praṇnam*—it is a most poignant utterance in which the whole being bursts forth as it were, and delivers itself of all that it needs and of all that it gives. It needs the Illumination: it can no longer bear the darkness and confusion of Ignorance in which it is entangled; and it gives itself whole and entire, absolutely and without reserve, throws itself simply at the mercy of the Divine. Arjuna fulfils, as very few can so completely, the fundamental conditions—the *sine qua non*—of discipleship.

A certain modern critic, however, demurs. He asks why Arjuna was chosen in preference to Yudhisthira and doubts the wisdom and justice of the choice (made by Sri Krishna or the author of the Gita). Is not the eldest of the Pandavas also the best? He possesses in every way a superior *ādhāra*. He has knowledge and wisdom; he is free from passions, calm and self-controlled; he always acts according to the dictates of what is right and true. He is not swayed by the impulses of the moment or by considerations relating to his personal self; serene and unruffled he seeks to fashion his conduct by the

highest possible standard available to him. That is why he is called *dharmarāja*. If such a one is not to be considered as an ideal disciple, who else can be?

To say this is to miss the whole nature of discipleship, at least as it is conceived in the Gita. A disciple is not a bundle of qualifications and attainments, however high or considerable they may be. A disciple is first and foremost an aspiring soul. He may not have high qualities to his credit; on the contrary, he may have what one calls serious defects, but even that would not matter if he possessed the one thing needful, the unescapable urge of the soul, the undying fire in the secret heart. Yudhishtira may have attained a high status of *sāttvic* nature; but the highest spiritual status, the Gita says, lies beyond the three Gunas. He is the fittest person for this spiritual life who has abandoned all *dharma*s—principles of conduct, modes of living—and taken refuge in the Lord alone, made the Lord's will the sole and sufficient law of life. Even though to outward regard such a person be full of sins, the Lord promises to deliver him from all that. It is the soul's love for the Divine given unconditionally and without reserve that can best purify the dross of the inferior nature and render one worthy of the Divine Grace.

Such was Arjuna's capacity; herein lay his strength, his spiritual superiority. It was because he could be so intimate with the Divine as to call him his friend and companion and playmate and speak to him in familiar and homely terms—even though he felt contrition for having in this way perhaps slighted the Lord and not paid sufficient regard towards him. Yet this turn of his soul and nature points to the straightness and simplicity and candidness that were there and it was this that helped to call in the Divine and the Divine choice to fall upon him.

Yudhishtira may have been and is great—greater perhaps than Arjuna—in many ways. But the Divine is no respecter of greatness: he looks only for the little thing no larger than the thumb secreted within the heart,—what is the quality, how it rings. We might recall in this connection that the first anthropoid ape who evolved into man or showed the definite turn towards humanity could not have been a mighty ape, great in the qualities of its species; rather the probability

is that it was a very commonplace, unpretentious, inglorious ape in whom the first ray of human reason dawned, and perhaps with his frail and delicate physical frame he was at a great disadvantage in the struggle for existence with his big and burly and "great" comrades. And yet it was such a one who surmounted apehood. Similarly, a great man, great in the human qualities need not necessarily be the most eligible for the spiritual realisation. *Na medhayā na bahunā srutena*¹.

All this, however, is not to say that Arjuna was in his external human nature, built of an inferior stuff; indeed, even from the human and profane standpoint Arjuna's was a heroic nature, if ever there was one. Still what one remarks in him is his representative character, that is to say, he is an average man, only the strengths and weaknesses are perhaps stressed and intensified in him. He is a hero, to be sure—we must remember also the other condition that a spiritual aspirant is to fulfil, *nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyah*²—but that did not immune him to the normal reactions of a normal man; on the contrary, the reactions were especially strong and violent, necessary indeed to bring out the whole implication of a spiritual crisis. Arjuna's doubts and depression, misgivings and questionings (Vishada Yoga) are what more or less every aspirant has to pass through when he arrives at the crucial point of his soul's journey and has either to choose the higher curve or follow the vicious circle. And at this threshold of the spiritual journey what is required of the true aspirant, the ideal disciple, is the resolution to face the situation, to go through to the end at the command and under the loving guidance of the Master. On this line Arjuna stands for us all and shows, by his example how we can take courage and march out of the inferior nature into the peace and light and power of the higher divine nature.

¹ "Nor by brain-power, nor by much learning of Scripture."—*Katha Upanishad*, I. 2. 23

² "This Self cannot be won by any who is without strength."—*Ibid.*

The Body Human

THE human frame is a miracle of creation. It would not be far wrong to say that the whole trend of physical evolution has been to bring out this morphological marvel. It has not been a very easy task for Nature to raise a living creature from its original crawling "crouching slouching" horizontal position to the standing vertical position which is so normal and natural to the human body. Man has proportionately a larger cranium with a greater and heavier content of the grey substance in comparison with the (vertebral) column upon which it is set, his legs too have to carry a heavier burden. And yet how easy and graceful his erect posture! It is a balancing feat worthy of the cleverest rope-dancer. Look at a bear or even at a chimpanzee standing and moving on its hind legs; what an uncouth, ungainly gait, forced and ill at ease! He is more natural and at home in the prone horizontal position. The bird was perhaps an attempt at change of position from the horizontal to the vertical: the frame here attained an angular incline (cf. *tiryak*, as the bird is called in Sanskrit), but to maintain even that position it was not possible to increase or enlarge the head. It is not idly that Hamlet exclaims:

What a piece of work is a man!...how infinite in faculties!
in form and moving how express and admirable!...the
beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!¹

The perfection of the anatomical and morphological structure in man consists precisely in its wonderful elasticity—the 'infinite faculty' or multiple functioning referred to by Shakespeare. This is the very characteristic character of man both with regard to his physical and psychological make-up. The

¹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 2, Sc. 2

other species are, everyone of them, more or less, a specialised formation; we have there a closed system, a fixed and definite physical mould and pattern of life. A cat or a crow of a million years ago, like 'the immemorial elm' was not very different from its descendant of today; not so with man. I mean, the human frame, in its general build, might have remained the same from the beginning of time, but the uses to which it has been put, the works that have been demanded of it are multifarious, indeed of infinite variety. Although it is sometimes stated that the human body too has undergone a change (and is still undergoing) from what was once heavy and muscular, tall and stalwart, with a thicker skeletal system, towards something lighter and more delicate. Also an animal, like the plant, because of its rigidity of pattern remains unchanged, keeping to its own geographical habitat. Change of climate meant for the animal a considerable change, a sea-change, a change of species, practically. But man can easily—much more easily than an animal or a plant—acclimatise himself to all sorts of variable climates. There seems to be a greater resilience in his physical system, even as a physical object. Perhaps it contains a greater variety of component elements and centres of energy which support its versatile action. The human frame, one may say, is like the solar spectrum that contains all the colour vibrations and all the lines characteristic of the different elements. The solar sphere is the high symbol for man.

The story runs (*Aitareya Upanishad*) that once the gods wished to come down and inhabit an earthly frame. Several animal forms (the cow, the horse) were presented to them one after another, but they were not satisfied, none was considered adequate for their habitation. At last the human frame (with its conscious personality) was offered to them and immediately they declared that that was indeed the perfect form they needed—*sukṛtam bateti*—and they entered into it.

The human frame is the abode of the gods; it is a temple of God, as we all know. But the most significant thing about it is that the gods alone do not dwell there: all beings, all creatures crowd there, even the ungodly and the undivine. The Pashu (the animal), the Pishacha (the demon), the Asura (the Titan), and the Deva (the god), all find comfortable lodging in it—there are many chambers indeed in this mansion

of the Lord. Man was made after the image of God and yet Lucifer had access into that tabernacle and all his host with him. This duality of the divine and the undivine, the characteristic mark of human nature as it is, presents a field and a labour through which man's progress has to be worked out. The soul, the divine flame, has been placed in Ignorance, that is to say, what is apparent Ignorance, the frame of Matter, just because this Matter in Ignorance is to be smelted, purified, given its original and intrinsic substance, shape and character. The human person in its actual form is not obviously something absolutely perfect and divine. The type, the norm it represents is divine, but it has been overlaid with all obscure and base elements—it has to be washed and cleaned thoroughly, smelted and reconditioned. The dark ungodly elements mar and vitiate; they must be removed on the one hand, but on the other, they point out and test the salvaging work that has to be done and is being done. Man is always at the crossroads. This is his especial difficulty and this is also his unique opportunity. His consciousness has a double valency, in contradistinction to the animal's which is, it can be said, monovalent, in that it is amoral, has not the sense of divided loyalty and hence the merit of choice. The movements of the animal follow a fixed stereotyped pattern, it has not got to deviate from the beaten track of its instincts. But man with his sense of the moral, of the good, of the progressive is at every step of his life faced with a dilemma, has to pause at a parting of the ways, always looks before and after and is puzzled at a *cas de conscience*. That, we have said, has been made for him the condition of growth, of a conscious and willed change with an ever-increasing tempo towards perfect perfection. That furnishes the occasion and circumstance by which he rises to divinity itself, becomes the Divine. He becomes the Divine thus not merely in the own home of the Divine, but on all the levels of the manifestation: all the planes of consciousness with all the hierarchy of beings—powers and personalities—find a new play of harmony, a supreme and global fulfilment in the transfigured human vehicle. The frame itself that encases the human consciousness acts as a living condenser: the very contour in its definiteness seems to exert a pressure towards an ever larger and higher synthesis, or, it may be

compared to a kind of field of force (Einsteinian, for example) that controls, regulates, moves and configurates all elements within its range. The human frame even as a frame possesses a magic virtue.

Vaishnavism sees the Divine as a human person, the human person *par excellence*. Krishna's body is a radiant form of consciousness (*cinmaya*), no doubt, but it is as definite, determinate, and concrete as the physical body, it is the physical itself but in its true substance. And its exquisiteness consists in its being human in form. The Vedantin's Maya does not touch it, it is beyond the illusory consciousness. For they say Goloka stands above Brahmaloaka.

The Christian conception of God-man is also extremely beautiful and full of meaning. God became man: He sent down upon earth his own and only Son to live among men as man. This indeed is His supreme Grace, His illimitable love for mankind. It is thus, in the words of the Offertory, that He miraculously created the dignity of human substance, holding Himself worthy to partake of our humanity. This carnal sinful body has been sanctified by the Christ having assumed it. In and through Him—his divine consciousness—it has been strained and purified, uplifted and redeemed. He has anointed it and given it a place in Heaven even by the side of the Father. Again, Mary—symbolising the earth or body consciousness, as Christian mystics themselves declare—was herself taken up bodily into the heavenly abode. The body celestial is this very physical human body cleared of its dross and filled with the divine substance. This could have been so precisely because it was originally the projection, the very image of God here below in the world of Matter. The mystery of Transubstantiation repeats and confirms the same symbology. The bread and wine of our secular body become the flesh and blood of the God-Man's body. The human frame is, as it were, woven into the very fabric of God's own truth and substance. The human form is inherent in the Divine's own personality. Is it mere anthropomorphism to say like this? We know the adage that the lion, were he self-conscious and creative, would paint God as a super-lion, that is to say, in his own image. Well, the difference is precisely here, that the lion is not self-conscious and creative. Man creates—not man the mere imaginative

artist but man the seer, the Rishi—he expresses and embodies, represents faithfully the truth that he sees, the truth that he is. It is because of this “conscious personality”, referred to in the parable of the Aitareya Upanishad,—that God has chosen the human form to inhabit.

This is man’s great privilege that, unlike the animal, he can surpass himself (the capacity, we may note, upon which the whole Nietzschean conception of humanity was based). Man is not bound to his human nature, to his anthropomorphism, he can rise above and beyond it, become what is (apparently) non-human. Therefore the Gita teaches: By thy self upraise thy self, lower not thy self by thy self. Indeed, as we have said, man means the whole gamut of existence. All the worlds and all the beings in all the worlds are also within his frame; he has only to switch or focus his consciousness on to a particular point or direction and he becomes a particular type in life. Man can be the very supreme godhead or at the other extreme a mere brute or any other intermediary creature in the hierarchy extending between the two.

The Divine means the All: whatever there is (manifest or beyond) is within Him and is Himself. Man too who is within that Divine is the Divine in a special way; for he is a replica or epitome of the Divine containing or embodying the three-fold status and movement of the Divine—the Transcendent, the Cosmic and the Individual. He is co-extensive with the Divine. Only, the Divine is conscious, supremely conscious, while Man is unconscious or at best half-conscious. God has made himself the world and its creatures, the transcendental has become the material cosmos, true; but God has made himself Man in a special sense and for a special purpose. Man is not a fabrication of the Lower Maya, a formation thrown up in the evolutionary course by a temporary idea in the Cosmic Mind and developed through the play of forces; on the other hand, it is a typical reality, a Real-Idea—a formation of the original truth-consciousness, the Divine’s own transcendental existence. Man is the figure of the Divine Person. The Impersonal become or viewed as the Personal takes up the human aspect, the human, that is to say, as its original prototype in the superconscience.

The conception of a personal immortality—the impersonal

is naturally always immortal, there is no problem there—of a physical immortality even attains a significant value looked at from this standpoint. The urge for immortality is not merely a wish to continue indefinitely an earthly life, because of its pleasures or because of an unreasoning attachment; it means regaining and establishing the immortal body that one has or that one is essentially and potentially. The body seeks to be immortal, for it contains and secretly is its immortal Formal Cause (to make use of an Aristotelian term). The materialisation of an immortal being and figure of being—that is the consummation demanded of human life on earth.

The spirit, the pure self in man is formless; but his soul—the spirit cast into the evolutionary mould in manifestation—has a form: it possesses a personal identity of its own. Each soul or Psyche is a contoured consciousness, as it were: it is not a vague indefinite charge of consciousness, but consciousness having magnitude and dimensions. And the physical body is a visible formula, a graph of that magnitude, an image—a faithful image or shadow thrown upon the wall of this cave of earthly life,—of a reality above and outside, as Plato conceived the phenomenon. And the human appearance too is an extension or projection of an inner and essential reality which brings out or takes up that configuration when fronting the soul in its evolutionary march through terrestrial life. A mystic poet says:

All dreams of the soul
End in a beautiful man's or woman's body.¹

This is not the utterance of a mere profane consciousness, such also is the experience of a deeper spiritual truth. For the Divine in one of its essential aspects is Ardhanarishwara, the original transcendental Man-Woman. And we feel and almost see that it is a human Face to which our adoration goes when we hear another mystic poet chant for us the *mantra*:

Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.²

¹ W. B. Yeats, "The Phases of the Moon", *The Wild Swans at Coole*

² Sri Aurobindo, "The Bird of Fire", *Collected Poems & Plays*

Some Conceptions and Misconceptions

1

A QUESTION is asked, where, at what stage or level of Involution does the principle of exclusive concentration (the principle of Ignorance) come in? If, as Sri Aurobindo says, it comes subsequently at a later stage, where was it then before? Was it not in the Absolute Reality itself? There can be nothing that is not inherent in the Absolute Reality. We all know, nothing comes out of nothing. Then, if it is in the original Reality already, why should it come out at a later stage and not be active from the very beginning? This standpoint seems to have been anticipated by some schools (Visishtadwaita Vedanta, for example) who describe in consequence the Reality (Brahman) as consisting, when viewed as a totality, of both Knowledge and Ignorance—*cit-acit*; the Ignorance is a sort of peripheral reality not touching or affecting the Knowledge, but connected with or depending upon the nuclear reality, something like the physical body coexisting with and depending on the soul or self. One can also remember in this connection the Purusha-Prakriti relation in Sankhya. Such a standpoint, I suppose, is the precursor or philosophical background of what is well known as the Manichean principle.

Sri Aurobindo's view is different. It is something like this — I am putting the thing as simply as possible, without entering into details or mysteries that merely confuse the brain. The Absolute Reality contains all, nothing can be outside it, pain and sin and all; true. But these do not exist as such in the supreme status, they are resolved each into its ultimate and fundamental force of consciousness. When we say all things, whatever they are, exist in the Divine Consciousness, the

Absolute, we have an idea that they exist there as they do here as objects or entities; it goes without saying, they do not. Naturally we have to make a distinction between things of Knowledge and things of Ignorance. Although there is a gradation between the two—Knowledge rolls or wraps itself gradually into Ignorance and Ignorance unrolls or unfolds itself slowly into Knowledge—still in the Divine Consciousness things of Knowledge alone exist, things of Ignorance cannot be said to exist there on the same title, because, as I have said, the original truths of things alone are there—not their derivations and deformations. One can say, indeed, that in the supreme Light darkness exists as a possibility; but this is only a figure of speech. Possibility does not mean that it is there like a seed—or even a chromosome rod—to sprout and grow. Possibility really means just a chance of the consciousness acting in a certain way, developing in a particular direction under certain conditions.

Matter exists in the absolute Consciousness, not as Matter but as its fundamental substratum, as that radical mode of being or consciousness which by the devolution of consciousness and the interaction of Knowledge and Ignorance in the end works itself out as Matter. So also with regard to Life and with regard to Mind. If things are to exist in the highest status of consciousness, the Divine Consciousness, exactly as they exist now, there would be no point or meaning in creation or manifestation. Manifestation or creation does not mean merely unveiling or unrolling in the sense of unpacking. It means a gradual shift in the stress of consciousness, giving it a particular mode of action.

The unrolling or Involution is the path traced by consciousness in its changing modes of concentration. The principle of concentration is inherent in consciousness. Sri Aurobindo speaks of four modes or degrees of this concentration: (1) the essential, (2) the integral, (3) the total or global and (4) the separative. The first is "a sole in-dwelling or an entire absorption in the essence of its own being"—it is the superconscious Silence, at one end, and the Inconscience, at the other. The second is the total Sachchidananda, the supramental concentration; the third, multiple or totalising overmental awareness; the fourth is the concentration of Ignorance. All the four,

however, form the integral play of one indivisible consciousness.

Here we come to the very heart of the mystery. As we have put it thus far, the process of Involution would appear as a series of stages in a descending order, a movement along a vertical line, as it were, one stage following another, more or less separate from each other, the lower being ever more ignorant, more separative, more exclusive. But this is not the whole picture. At each lower stage the higher is not merely high above, but also comes down and stands behind or becomes immanent in the lower. Along with the vertical movement there is also a horizontal movement. In other words, even when we are sunk in the lowest stratum of Ignorance—in the domain of Matter—we have also there all the other strands behind, even the very highest, not merely as passive or neutral entities, but as dynamic agents exerting their living pressure to the full. Indeed the Ignorance is not mere Ignorance, but Knowledge itself, the very highest Knowledge, but in a particular mode of activity. What appears ignorant is full of a secret Knowledge—it is just the outer surface, the facet that appears as its opposite because of a particular manner of concentration, a total self-abandonment in the object of Knowledge. That Knowledge stands revealed if the mask is put away, that is to say, if we get behind, if we *release* the exclusiveness of the concentration. This release or getting behind does not mean necessarily the dissolution of the status itself—for it is the pressure from behind, the concentration of the hidden consciousness that creates the status and its truth-forms; with the exclusiveness goes away only the twist, the aberration produced by it. When the consciousness withdraws from its mode and field of exclusive concentration, it need not concentrate again on the withdrawal only, it can be an inclusive concentration also embracing both the status—the frontal and the behind. Both can be held together in one single movement of consciousness possessing the double function of projection and comprehension—*prajñāna* and *viññāna*.

Such a synthetic poise is not a mere theoretical possibility: it is an actuality and is being demonstrated by the fact of evolution. The partial release of the absolutely exclusive concentration of consciousness in Matter has given rise to Life

which is a double poise: Life plays in and through Matter and has not dissolved Matter. Likewise a further release of concentration has given birth to Mind which still bases itself upon and is woven into Life and Matter. The change-over from unconsciousness to consciousness and from consciousness to super-consciousness is the movement of consciousness from a unilateral towards an ever widening multiple poise and functioning of concentration.

The exclusive concentration was the logical and inevitable final term of a movement of separativity and exteriorisation. It had its necessity and utility. Its special function was utilised by Nature for precision and perfection in details of execution in the most material order of reality. Indeed, what can be more exact and accurate than the laws of physics, the mathematical laws that govern the movements of the material particles? Furthermore, if we look at the scientist himself do we not find in him an apt image of the same phenomenon? A scientist means a specialist—the more specialised and restricted his view, the surer he is likely to be in his particular domain. And specialised knowledge means a withdrawal from other fields and viewpoints of knowledge, an ignorance of them. Likewise, a workman who moulds the head of a pin is all concentrated upon that single point of existence—he forgets the whole world and himself in that act whose perfect execution seems to depend upon the measure of his self-oblivion. But evidently this is not bound to be so. A one-pointed self-absorption—that is Ignorance—is certainly an effective way of dealing with material objects—things of Ignorance; but it is not the only way. It is a way or mechanism adopted by Nature in a certain status under certain conditions. One need not always forget oneself in the act in order to do the act perfectly. An unconscious instinctive act is not always best done—it can be done best consciously, intuitively. A wider knowledge, a greater acquaintance with objects and facts and truths of other domains too is being more and more insisted upon as a surer basis of specialisation. The pinpointed (one might almost say geometrically pointed) consciousness in Matter that resolves itself into unconsciousness acts perfectly but blindly; the vast consciousness also acts there with absolute perfection but consciously—conscious in the highest degree.

As we have said, super-consciousness does not confine itself to the supreme status alone, to the domain of pure infinity, but it comes down and embraces the most inferior status too, the status of the finite. Precisely because it is infinity, it is not bound to its infinity but can express its infinity in and through infinite limits.

2

The principle of "exclusive concentration" does not by itself really create the "objects" of the material world; it creates the perception—the illusory perception—of separateness, that objects are more or less closed systems, distinct and isolated from one another. The sense of limitation—and hence actual limitation, not however real or essential limitation—comes out of the exclusive concentration. This does not mean that the limitation or discreteness of objects is merely *psychological* (mental), not *ontological*, as one may say. In Sri Aurobindo's outlook the distinction between psychological and ontological is not trenchant and absolute. For, "psychological", according to him, does not mean merely "mental" but also "relating to consciousness"; and although mind does not create material objects, consciousness may do so—indeed it is the force of the original consciousness, which is the force of being, that has created the physical plane of multiplicity. This creative power is the self-projecting energy of consciousness—*prajñāna*. It is, in other words, the force of individuation inherent in the play of consciousness. Now, as I have already said, at a certain stage, under certain conditions, through a gradation of stages, this force of individuation originally and intrinsically existing and working in and through unity and integration, is possessed or veiled by or "devolves" into a force of limitation, meaning separateness and exclusion. What would otherwise be an ensemble, an organism of individualities held together and moving as various forms or lines of force of one and the same reality, is now broken up and becomes a conglomeration of isolated entities. Unity is transformed into multiplicity, solidarity is lost in plurality.

We can, however, make a distinction between "limitation" and "delimitation" or individuation. Limitation is a move-

ment of Ignorance: it is the result of exclusive concentration. It creates separateness, forgets the unity. Delimitation, on the contrary, is a movement of knowledge, of pure consciousness dynamic. It creates diversity, multiplicity maintained in unity.

It is to be added that the limitation in Ignorance is after all apparent; that does not mean it is unreal or illusory, in the sense of Mayavada. Here is the distinction: Mayavada holds all formation as *māyā*, illusory, makes no difference between limitation and delimitation: according to it, all delimitation is ignorant and illusory limitation, none has real or essential existence. In Sri Aurobindo's view limitation is real, as also delimitation: only the former is a temporary reality, it is the latter itself but under certain conditions. Again, Mayavada speaks of the Brahman, the Absolute or Transcendent as the sole and true reality: it is the Stable, the Unmoving, the utter Unity cancelling, negating all movement and multiplicity. Sri Aurobindo views the highest reality as dynamic also, permeating the multiplicity and becoming the multiplicity, becoming or existing as the multiplicity in a movement of Knowledge, becoming and appearing also at first in a movement and mode of Ignorance as the material multiplicity but gradually transmuting this ignorant multiplicity into a movement and embodiment of Knowledge. For the Knowledge was always there in and behind the Ignorance, secretly informing and guiding, moulding and transforming it.

Thus, for example, we would not say pain is an illusion, because Ananda is the root of all and is the All. We say pain is also a reality: it is a temporary and localised form of Ananda, Ananda muted and deformed, under certain stresses and conditions. Ananda is there always but not away and aloof from pain; it is not the opposite or the negation of pain. Nor is pain a superimposition, as something foreign, upon Ananda, so that when it passes away, like a cloud, Ananda appears automatically in its full glory. We consider pain as a formation of Ananda, it is the first result of an effort of consciousness to hold Ananda in and through a form, but it need not and cannot be the last consummation.

In fact, the Mayavadin ascribes true reality (*pāramārthika*) to the transcendental alone; even when that reality is spoken of as within and behind—and not merely beyond—the world

and the individual, he takes it to mean as something away and aloof from the appearances, unmixed and untouched by these, and hence practically transcendent. Sri Aurobindo gives full and independent value to each of these triple states which, united and fused together, form the true and total reality. The transcendent reality is also immanent in the cosmos as the World-Power and the World-Consciousness and the creative Delight: it is also resident in the individual as the individual godhead—*antaryāmin*—the conscious Energy that informs, inspires, drives and directs all local formations towards a divine fulfilment in time and in this physical domain. In this view nothing is illusory—even though some may be temporary—they are all contributory to the Divine End and take their place there in a transfigured form and rhythm. We are here far from being such stuffs as dreams are made of.

One must not forget, however, that the principle of exclusive concentration cannot be isolated from the total action of consciousness and viewed as functioning by itself at any time. We isolated it for logical comprehension. In actuality it is integrated with the whole *nisus* of consciousness and operates in conjunction with and as part of the total drive. That total drive at one point results in the multiple realities of Matter. When the element of limitation in the physical plane is ascribed to the exclusiveness of a stress in consciousness, it should not be forgotten that the act is, as it were, a “joint and several responsibility” of the whole consciousness in its multiple functioning. And the reverse movement is also likewise a global act: there too the force that withdraws, ascends or eliminates cannot be isolated from the other force that reaffirms, re-establishes, reintegrates,—the principle of exclusiveness (like that of pain) is not proved to be illusory and non-existent, but reappears in its own essential nature as a principle of centring or canalisation of consciousness.

Here or Otherwhere

A QUESTION is often asked of us whether it is possible to do Yoga while remaining in the world. Some declare outright that it is not possible: world and Yoga are, like oil and water, absolutely different things, they do not go together. World means, to put it plainly, earning money and raising family. Well, these two are the very opposite of Yoga, for they involve, at their best, desire and attachment and, at their worst, dishonesty and deceit, lust and libertinage. There is the other school, on the contrary, that pronounces that a Yogic life must be lived in the world if it is not your intention to leave that world altogether and seek and merge in the Beyond, the otherwhere, the immutable transcendent Brahman. It is quite possible for one to be in the very midst of the worldly forces and yet remain unshaken by them. Therefore it has been said: When the causes of disturbance are there and still the mind is not disturbed—that indeed is the sign of a wise steadiness.

It can, however, be asked, what then is meant by being in the world? If it means merely sitting quiet, suffering and observing nonchalantly the impacts of the world—something in the manner described by Matthew Arnold in his famous lines on the East—, well, that stoic way, the way of indifference is a way of being in the world which is not very much unlike not being in the world; for it means simply erecting a wall of separation or isolation within one's consciousness without moving away physically. It is a psychological escapism. But if by living in the world we should mean participating in the movements of the world—not only being but becoming, not merely standing as a witness but moving out as a doer—then the problem becomes different. For the question we have to ask in that case is what happens to our duties—life in the

world being a series of duties, duty to oneself (self-preservation), duty to the family (race-preservation), duty to the country, to humanity and, finally, duty to God (which last belongs properly to the life in Yoga). Now, can all these duties dwell and flourish together? The Christ is categorical on the point. He says, in effect: Leave aside all else and follow Me and look not back. Christ's God seems to be a jealous God who does not tolerate any other god to share in his sovereign exclusiveness. You have to give up, if you wish to gain. They who lose life shall find it and they who stick to life shall as surely lose it.

But is not The Gita's solution somewhat different? Sri Krishna urges Arjuna to be in the very thick of a deadly fight, not a theoretical or abstract combat, but take a hand in the direst man-slaughter, to "do the deed" (even like Macbeth) but yogically. Yes, The Gita's position seems to be that—to accept all life integrally, to undertake all necessary work (*kartavyam karma*) and turn them Godward. The Gita seeks to do it in its own way which consists of two major principles: (1) to do the work, whatever it may be, unattached—without any desire for the fruit, simply as a thing that has to be done, and (2) to do it as a sacrifice, as an offering to the supreme Master of works.

The question naturally turns upon the nature and the kind of work—whether there is a choice and selection in it. Gita speaks indeed of all works, *kṛtsna-karmakṛt*, but does that really mean any and every work that an ignorant man, an ordinary man steeped in the three Gunas does or can do? It cannot be so. For, although all activity, all energy has its source and impetus in the higher consciousness of the Divine, it assumes on the lower ranges indirect, diverted or even perverted formulations and expressions, not because of the inherent falsity of these so-called inferior strata, the instruments, but because of their temporary impurity and obscurity. There are evidently activities and impulsions born exclusively of desire, of attachment and egoism. There are habits of the body, urges of the vital, notions of the mind, there are individual and social functions that have no place in the spiritual scheme, they have to be rigorously eschewed and eliminated. Has not the Gita said, this is desire, this is passion born of the quality of Rajas?... There is not much meaning in trying to do these

works unattached or to turn them towards the Divine. When you are unattached, when you turn to the Divine, these simply drop away of themselves. Yes, there are social duties and activities and relations that inevitably dissolve and disappear as you move into the life divine. Some are perhaps tolerated for a period, some are occasions for the consciousness to battle and surmount, grow strong and pass beyond. You have to learn to go beyond and new-create your environment.

It was Danton who said, one carries not his country with him at the sole of his shoe. Even so you cannot hope to shift bodily your present social ensemble, place it wholesale in the divine life on the plea that it will be purified and transformed in the process. Purification is there indeed, but one must remember purification literally means burning and not a little of the past and present has to be burnt down to ashes.

The Sunlit Path

SRI AUROBINDO speaks of the sunlit path in Yoga. It is the path of happy progress where dangers and difficulties, violent ups and downs are reduced to a minimum, if not altogether obviated. In ideal conditions it is as it were a smooth and fair-weather sailing, as much of course as it is humanly possible. What are then these conditions? It is when the sadhaka keeps touch with his inmost being, his psychic consciousness, when this inner Guide and Helmsman is given the charge; for then he will be able to pass sovereignly by all shoals and rocks and storm-racks, through all vicissitudes, gliding on—slow or swift as needed—inevitably towards the goal. A doubting mind, an impetuous vital urge, an inert physical consciousness, though they may be there in any strength, cannot disturb or upset the even tenor of the forward march. Even outward circumstances bow down to the pressure of the psychic temperament and bring to it their happy collaboration.

This may not always mean that all is easy and difficulty is simply not, once the psychic is there. It becomes so when the psychic is there fully in front; even otherwise when the inner being is in the background, still sensed and, on the whole, obeyed, although there are battles, hard battles to be fought and won, then even a little of this Consciousness saves from a great fear. For, then in all circumstances, you will have found a secret joy and cheer and strength that buoy you up and carry you through.

Like the individual, nations too have their sunlit path and the path of the doldrum as well. So long as a nation keeps to the truth of its inner being, follows its natural line of development, remains faithful to its secret godhead, it will have chosen that good part which will bring it divine blessings and fulfil-

ment. But sometimes a nation has the stupidity to deny its self, to run after an *ignis fatuus*, a *māyāmṛga*, then grief and sorrow and frustration lie ahead. We are afraid India did take such a wrong step when she refused to see the great purpose behind the present war and tried to avoid contributing her mite to the evolutionary Force at work. On the other hand Britain in a moment of supreme crisis, that meant literally life or death, not only to herself or to other nations, but to humanity itself, had the good fortune to be led by the right Inspiration, the whole nation rose as one man and swore allegiance to the cause of humanity and the gods. That was how she was saved and that was how she acquired a new merit and a fresh lease of life. Unlike Britain, France bowed down and accepted what should not have been accepted and cut herself adrift from her inner life and truth, the result was five years of hell. Fortunately, the hell in the end proved to be a purgatory, but what a purgatory! For there were souls who were willing to pay the price and did pay it to the full cash and nett. So France has been given the chance again to turn round and take up the thread of her life where it snapped.

Once more another crisis seems to be looming before the nations, once more the choice has to be made and acted upon. In our weakness it is natural and easy to invoke God, to feel the presence of a higher Guidance, to trust in a heavenly light; but it is in our strength that we must know whose strength it is, and in whose strength it is that we conquer.

If the present war has any meaning, as we all declare it has, then we must never lose sight of that meaning. And our true victory will come only in the process of the realisation of that meaning. That is the sunlit path we refer to here which the nations have to follow in their mutual dealings. It is the path of the evolutionary call to which we say we have responded and to which we must remain loyal and faithful in thought, in speech and in deed. If we see dark and ominous clouds gathering round us, dangers and difficulties suddenly raising their heads, then we must look about and try honestly to find out whether we have not strayed away from the sunlit path.

The Spiritual Outlook

THE spiritual outlook is a global view, unlike the mental which is very often the view from a single angle or in rare cases, at the most, from a few angles. The ordinary man, even the most cultured and enlightened, has always a definite standpoint from which he surveys and judges; indeed without such a standpoint he would not be considered educated and worthy of respect. In other words, he aspects one side of his object and thus perceives only a partial truth. That there are other standpoints, that other people may view the same thing from other grounds does not trouble him or troubles him to the extent that he considers them all mistaken, illusory. He condescends to admit other standpoints if they are near enough to his, if they support or confirm it. Otherwise, if they are contrary or contradictory to what he perceives and concludes, then evidently they are to be discarded and thrown away into the dustbin as rubbish.

The spiritual consciousness dawns precisely with the rejection of this monomania, this obsession of one-track mentality. It means, in other words, nothing less than coming out of the shell of one's egoism. To be able thus to come out of oneself, enter into others' consciousness, see things as others see them, that is the great initiation, the true beginning of the life of the spirit. For the Spirit is the truth of all things: all things, even what appears evil and reprehensible, exist and have their play because of a core of truth and force of truth in each. Mind and mind's external consciousness and practical drive compel one to take to a single line of perception and action and that which is more or less superficial and immediately necessary. But it is only when one withdraws from the drive of Maya and gets behind, gets behind all opposing views and standpoints and tries to see what is the underlying truth that

seeks to manifest in each, that one enters the gateway of the spiritual consciousness.

The spiritual consciousness is global, not in the sense that it is eclectic, that is to say, the sum-total of all the superficial views, but in the sense that it experiences the one dynamic truth that underlies all and which manifests its varying powers and potentials in various objects and forces, expressing itself in multiple standpoints and modes and angles of vision.

When the Divine acts, it acts always in and through this transcendental and innermost truth of things. When it helps the seeker, it touches and inspires the secret soul in him—his truth—not like the human teacher or reformer who addresses himself to the outer personality, to laws and codes, prohibitions and injunctions, reward and punishment, for the education and instruction of his pupil. Indeed, the Divine chastises also in the same way. The Asura or the anti-divine he does not kill with one blow nor even with many blows of his thunderbolt or burn away with his red wrath. The image of Zeus or Jehovah is a human figuration: it depicts the human way of dealing with one's enemies. The Divine deals with the undivine in the divine way, for the undivine too is not something outside the Divine. The Asura also has his truth, his truth in the Divine, only it has been degraded and deformed under circumstances. The Divine simply disengages, picks up that core of truth and takes it away so that it can no longer be appropriated and deformed by the Asura who now losing the secret support of his truth automatically crumbles to pieces as mere husk and chaff. If there is something more than the merely human in the image of Durga, the Goddess transfixing her lance right into the heart of the Asura may be taken as indicative of this occult truth.

There is then this singular and utter harmony in the divine consciousness resolving all contraries and incompatibles. *Neha nānāsti kiñcana*, there is no division or disparity here. Established in this consciousness, the spiritual man naturally and inevitably finds that he is in all and all are in him and that he is all and all are he, for all and he are indivisibly that single (yet multiple) reality. The brotherhood of man is only a derivative from the more fundamental truth of the universal selfhood of man.

Sectarianism or Loyalty

MODERN culture demands that one should not be bound to one creed or dogma, swear by one principle or rule of life or be led blindly by one man. Truth, it is said, has many facets and the human being is also not a Cyclops, a one-eyed creature. To fix oneself to one mode of seeing and believing and even behaving is to be narrow, restricted, sectarian. One must be able to see many standpoints, appreciate views of variance with one's own, appraise the relativity of all standards. Not to be able to do so leads to obscurantism and fanaticism. The Inquisitors were monomaniacs, obsessed by an *idée fixe*. On the other hand, the wisest counsel seems to have been given by Voltaire who advised the inquirers to learn from anywhere and everywhere, even Science from the Chinese. In our Indian legends we know that Uddhava did not hesitate to accept and learn from more than a dozen Gurus. That is as it should be if we would have a mind and consciousness large and vast and all-encompassing.

And yet there is a question. While attempting to be too liberal and catholic one may happen to turn a dilettante. Dilettante is one who takes an interest, an aesthetic, a dispassionate and detached interest in all things. His interest is intellectual, something abstract and necessarily superficial; it is not a vital interest, not a question of his soul, an urgent problem of his living.

A spiritual interest is nothing if it is not in this way a question that touches life to its core. That means a definite goal and appropriate means to reach that goal, and that again necessarily involves a choice, a process of acceptance and rejection. The goal is also called the *īṣṭa*, the godhead that one seeks, the Divine that is fulfilled in oneself. Being a per-

sonality, an individual, one has to choose, one can best follow the line of evolution and growth and fulfilment of that personality and individuality—that is the call of the Psyche, the direction of the Jiva. In other words, one has to be loyal and faithful to one's nature and being. That is why it is said: Better to perish while fulfilling one's own law of life than to flourish by fulfilling another's law. By being curious about another's Dharma—it is this kind of curiosity that led to the original fall of man, according to the Bible—that is to say, if one is vitally curious, allows oneself to be influenced and so affected and diverted by what is an outside and foreign force, because not in the line of one's own truth and development, one asks for a mixture and intervention which bring confusion, thwart the growth and fulfilment, as that falsifies the nature.

It is not only bad influences that affect you badly, even good influences do so—like medicines that depend upon the particular constitution for their action. In ancient times this was called *varṇasaṅkara* or *dharmasaṅkara*, as for example, when a Kshatriya sought to follow the rule of life of a Brahmin or vice versa. This kind of admixture or *mésalliance* was not favoured, as it was likely to bring about an obscurity in the consciousness and in the end frustration in the spiritual life. That was the original psychological reason why heresy was considered such a dangerous thing in all religions.

It is not sufficient to say that God is one and therefore wherever He is found and however He is found and whoever finds Him one must implicitly accept and obey and follow. God is one indeed: but it is equally true that he is multiple. God is not a point, but a limitless infinity, so that when one does reach Him one arrives at a particular spot, as it were, enters into only one of his many mansions. Likewise, God's manifestation upon earth has been infinitely diverse, his Vibhūti, Avatara, his prophets and viceregents have been of all sorts and kinds. Precisely because God is at once one and infinitely multiple and because human nature also is likewise, if one in essence, infinitely multiple in expression, each one, while seeing and finding the one God, seeks and finds him in and through a particular formulation. That is the original meaning, the genesis and justification of creeds

and dogmas. Only, it must be borne in mind, that one can be faithful even to a particular creed and dogma and yet transcend it, live a particular mode of life and yet possess at the back of it and as its support the very sense and consciousness of infinity itself. Where there is this synthetic and transcendent experience dogmatism has no place, nor conflict between creed and creed.

One can be as catholic and boundless as infinity, still one can and has to bow down to a special figure of it, since or if one who approaches it has a figure of his own. Just in the same way as when one is in the body, one has to live a particular life framed by the body, even the mind as well as the life are canalised in the mould of the body consciousness, and yet at the same time one can live in and through the inner consciousness immeasurably, innumerable in other bodies, in the unbarred expanse of the cosmic and the transcendent. The two experiences are not contradictory, rather they reinforce each other.

Uddhava might have had numberless teachers and instructors, but the Guru of his soul was Sri Krishna alone, none other. We may learn many things from many places, from books, from nature, from persons; intuitions and inspirations may come from many quarters, inside and outside, but the central guidance flows from one source only and one must be careful to keep it unmixed, undefiled, clear and pure. When one means nothing more than playing with ideas and persons and places, there is no harm in being a globe-trotter; but as soon as one becomes serious, means business, one automatically stops short, finds and sticks to his Ishta, even like the Gopis of Sri Krishna who declared unequivocally that they would not move out of Brindaban even by a single step.

Sincerity

THE first condition of the spiritual life, and the last condition as well, is sincerity. One must sincerely want the spiritual life in order to have it. The soul—the psychic being—is always sincere: it is made of the very stuff of sincerity, for it is a part, or a spark of the Divine Consciousness itself. When one feels the call, turns one's back to the worldly life, moves towards the life spiritual, one follows then the urge of one's true being, the psychic being: one is then naturally sincere, firmly and spontaneously devoted to the Divine, unequivocally loyal and faithful to the Beloved and the Master.

This central sincerity, however, has to be worked out in actual life. For, one may be true in the spirit, but false—weak, that is to say—in the flesh. The light of the central being usually finds its way first into the mind. One becomes then mentally sincere: in other words, one has the idea, the thought that the Divine is the goal and nothing else can or shall satisfy. With the light in the mind, one sees also in oneself more and more the dark spots, the weaknesses, the obstacles—one becomes conscious of one's feelings, discovers elements that have to be corrected or purged. But this mental sincerity, this recognition in the understanding is not enough: it remains mostly ineffective and barren with regard to life and character. One appears at this stage to lead a double life: one knows and understands, to some extent at least, but one is unable to act up even to that much knowledge and understanding. It is only when the power of sincerity descends still further and assumes a concreter form, when the vital becomes sincere and is converted, then the urge is there not only to see and understand, but to do and achieve. Without the vital's sincerity, its will to be transformed, one remains at best a witness, one has

an inner perception of consciousness of the Divine, but in actual living one lets the old ordinary nature to go its own way. It is the sincerity in the vital, its will to possess the Divine and the Divine alone, its ardour to collaborate with the Divine that brings about the crucial, the most dynamic change. Sadhana instead of being a mere mental occupation, an intellectual pursuit, acquires the urgency of living and doing and achieving. Finally, the vital sincerity, when it reaches its climax, calls for the ultimate sincerity—sincerity in the body. When the body consciousness becomes sincere then we cannot but be and act as decided and guided by the divine consciousness; we live and move and have our being wholly in the divine manner. Then what the inmost being, the psychic, envisages in the divine light, the body inevitably and automatically executes. There is no gap between the two. The spirit and the flesh—soul and body—are soldered, fused together in one single compact entity. One starts with the central sincerity in the psychic being and progress of sadhana means the extension of this sincerity gradually to all the outlying parts and levels of the being till, when the body is reached, the whole consciousness becomes, as it were, a massive pyramid of loyalty.

True Humility

It is not by repeating *mea culpa ad infinitum* that one can show one's true humility. In owning too much and too often one's sins, one may be just on the wrong side of virtue. There lurks a strain of vanity in self-maceration: the sinner in an overdose of self-pity almost feels himself saintly. Certainly, one must stand before oneself face to face, not hide or minimise or explain away one's errors and lapses, all one's omissions and commissions. But one need not brood over them, merely repenting and repining. One sees steadily, without flinching, what one actually is and then resolutely and sincerely takes to the ways and means of changing it, becoming what one has to be. A fall, the discovery of a new frailty should be an occasion not to chastise and punish yourself, thus to depress yourself and harden your nature, but to enthuse you with a fresh resolution, to rekindle your aspiration so that you may take another step forward. And, naturally, this you must do not with the sense that you can succeed or move forward by any inherent capacity of yours—your failures are there always as standing eye-openers to you. No, it is not your self but the Divine Self that will come to your succour and lift you up—*tameva eṣa vṛṇute tanum swam*—to him alone it unveils its own body. That is the humility to be learnt. But it does not mean that you are to remain merely passive, inert—you cannot but be that if you are only a “weeping willow”—a dead-weight upon the force of Grace that would carry you up. Rather you should throw your weight, whatever it is, on the side of the Divine. An atmosphere of alacrity and happiness and goodwill goes a long way to the redemption and regeneration of the consciousness. This is demanded of you; the rest is the work of the Divine. It is under such conditions that the Divine's

help becomes all the more speedy and effective. Otherwise, mere contrition and lamentation and self-torture mean, as I have said, a ballast, a burden upon the force of progress and purification; as Sri Krishna says in the Gita, by oppressing oneself one oppresses only the Divine within. Humility, in order to be true and sincere, need not be sour and dour in appearance or go about in sack-cloth and ashes. On the contrary, it can be smiling and buoyant: and it is so, because it is at ease, knowing that things will be done—some things naturally will be undone too—quietly, quickly, if necessary, and inevitably, provided the right consciousness, the right will within is maintained. The humble consciousness does not, of course, take credit for what is being done for it, nor does it concentrate wholly or chiefly on its utter futility and smallness. It feels small or helpless not in the sense as when one feels weak and miserable and almost undone, but as a child feels, naturally and innocently, in the lap of its mother: only perhaps it is more awake and self-conscious than the child mentality.

Humility is unreservedly humble, as it envisages the immensity of the labour the Divine has undertaken, sees the Grace, infinite and inscrutable, working miracles every moment: and it is full of gratitude and thanksgiving and quiet trust and hopefulness. Certainly, it means self-forgetfulness and selflessness, as it cannot co-exist with the sense of personal worth and merit, with any appreciation of one's own tapasya and achievement, even as it thrives ill upon self-abasement and self-denigration, for if one is *rajasic*, the other is *tamasic* egoism—egoism, in any case. Absolute nullity of the egoistic self is the condition needed, but anything less than that, any lowering of the consciousness beyond this zero point means reaffirming the ego in a wrong direction. True humility has an unostentatious quietness, as it has a living and secret contact with the divine consciousness.

The Spirit of Tapasya

TAPASYA (Asceticism) is usually understood to mean the capacity to undergo physical discomfort and suffering. We are familiar with various types of Tapasya: sitting in summer with blazing fire all around and the fiery noonday sun overhead (Panchagnivrata), exposing one's bare limbs to the cold biting blasts among the eternal snows, lying down on a bed of sharp nails, betaking oneself to sack-cloth and ashes, fasting even to the point of death: there is no end to the variety of ways and means which man's ingenuity has invented to torture himself. Somehow the feeling has grown among spiritual, religious and even moral aspirants as well that the body is the devil that has to be curbed and controlled with bit and bridle and whip. Indeed the popular view measures the greatness of a saint by the amount of his physical privations.

One seems not to know that the devil cannot be so easily checkmated or beguiled. For, indeed, it is easy for the body to take punishment, to submit to all kinds of rigours, yet feel as if it was making ample amends and atonement in that way rather than really give up its aboriginal instincts and impulses. Often one deceives oneself, succeeds in hiding, in secretly preserving one's unsaintliness behind a smoke-screen of the utmost physical tapasya.

Real Tapasya, however, is not in relation to the body and its comforts and discomforts; it is in relation to the inner being, the consciousness and its directives and movements. Tapasya, austerity, consists in reacting to the downward pull of the ordinary consciousness, turning and attuning it to the rhythm of higher levels. To oppose the force of gravitation, to move ceaselessly towards purer and luminous heights of being and consciousness, that is Tapasya, Askesis, true ascetic-

ism. Virgil, the great poet of a diviner order in human life, expressed the idea most beautifully and aptly in those well-known lines, one of the characteristic passages showing his genius at its best:

*...superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est.*¹

...to move out into the higher spaces,
This is work, here is labour.

Heroism consists in this untiring march upward to more and more rarefied heights. That means the growth of consciousness, its uplifting and expansion, freeing it from the limitations of the ignorant egoistic movements, pressing it forward to the domains of higher illuminations, towards spiritual consciousness and soul-knowledge, towards communion with the Divine, the cosmic and the transcendent Reality. That is the real work and labour. Bodily suffering is nothing: it is neither a sign nor a test of the ardours of consciousness thus seeking to uplift itself. Indeed, Tapas, the word from which tapasya is derived, means energy of consciousness, and Tapasya is the exercise, the utilisation of that energy for the ascent and expansion of the consciousness. It is this inner athleticism that is the thing needful, not its vain physical simulacrum—not the one which is commonly worshipped.

¹ Virgil: *Aeneid*, VI. 128

Dynamic Fatalism

The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable¹...

If it is so, then what is the necessity at all of work and labour and travail—this difficult process of sadhana? The question is rather naïve, but it is very often asked. The answer also could be very simple. The change decreed is precisely worked out through the travail: one is the end, the other is the means; the goal and the process, both are decreed and inevitable. If it is argued, supposing none made the effort, even then would the change come about, in spite of man's inaction? Well, first of all, this is an impossible supposition. Man cannot remain idle even for a moment: not only the inferior Nature, but the higher Nature too is always active in him—remember the words of the Gita—though behind the veil, in the inner consciousness. Secondly, if it is really so, if man is not labouring and working and making the attempt, then it must be understood that the time has not yet come for him to undergo the change he has still to wait: one of the signs of the imminence of the change is this very intensity and extensiveness of the labour among mankind. If, however, a particular person chooses to do nothing, prefers to wait and see—hopes in the end to jump at the fruit all at once and possess it or hopes the fruit to drop quietly into his mouth—well, this does not seem to be a likely happening. If one wishes to enjoy the fruit, one must share in the effort to sow and grow. Indeed, the process itself of reaching the higher consciousness involves a gradual heightening of the consciousness. The means is really part of the end. The joy of victory is the consummation of the joy of battle.

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *The Mother*

Man can help or retard the process of Nature, in a sense. If his force of consciousness acts in line with Nature's secret movement, then that movement is accelerated: through the soul or self that is man, it is the Divine, Nature's lord and master who drives and helps Nature forward. If, on the contrary, man follows his lesser self, his lower ego, rajasic and tamasic, then he throws up obstacles and barriers which hamper and slow down Nature's march.

In a higher sense, from a transcendental standpoint, however, this too is only an appearance. In reality man neither helps nor hinders Prakriti. For in that sphere the two are not separate entities. What is viewed as the helping hand of man is really Nature helping herself: man is the conscious movement of Nature. In that transcendent status the past and the future are rolled together in the eternal present and all exist there as an accomplished fact: there is nothing there to be worked out and achieved. But lower down there is a play of forces, of conflicting possibilities and the resultant is a balance of these divergent lines. When one identifies oneself with the higher static consciousness one finds nothing to be done, all is realised—"the eternal play of the eternal child in the eternal garden".¹ But when one lives in the Kurukshetra of forces, one cannot throw away one's Gandiva and say, "I will not fight".

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *Thoughts and Glimpses*

Mater Dolorosa

SUFFERING, Distress and Death today hold the earth in thrall. And yet can there be any other issue in temporal life? That seems to be the ineluctable fate for mankind. Ages ago it was declared, the wages of sin is death.

Doubters ask, however, if sinners alone suffered, one would not perhaps mind; but along with sinners why should innocents, nay even the virtuous, pass under the axe? What sins indeed babes commit? Are the sins of the fathers truly visited upon coming generations? A queer arrangement, to say the least, if there is a wise and just and benevolent God! Yes, how many honest people, people who strive to live piously, honestly and honourably, according to the law of righteousness, fail to escape! All equally undergo the same heavy punishment. Is it not then nearer the truth to say that a most mechanical Nature, a mere gamble of chance, a statistical equation, as mathematicians say, moves the destiny of creatures and things in the universe, that there is nowhere a heart or consciousness in the whole business?

Some believers in God or in the Spirit admit that it is so. The world is the creation of another being, a not-God, a not-Spirit—whether Maya or Ahriman or the Great Evil. One has simply to forget the world, abandon earthly existence altogether as a nightmare. Peace, felicity one can possess and enjoy—but not here in this vale of tears, *anityam asukham lokam imam*, but elsewhere beyond.

Is that the whole truth? We, for ourselves, do not subscribe to this view. Truth is a very complex entity, the universe a mingled strain. It is not a matter of merely sinners and innocents that we have to deal with. The problem is deeper and more fundamental. The whole question is,—where, in which

world, on which level of consciousness do we stand, and, what is more crucial, how much of that consciousness is dynamic and effective in normal life. If we are in the ordinary consciousness and live wholly with that consciousness, it is inevitable that, being in the midst of Nature's current, we should be buffeted along, the good and the evil, as we conceive them to be, befalling us indiscriminately. Or, again, if we happen to live in part or even mainly in an inner or higher consciousness, more or less in a mood of withdrawal from the current of life allowing the life movements to happen as they list, then too we remain, in fact, creatures and playthings of Nature and we must not wonder if, externally, suffering becomes the badge of our tribe.

And yet the solution need not be a total rejection and transcendence of Nature. For what is ignored in this view is Nature's dual reality. In one form, the inferior (*aparā*), Nature means the Law of Ignorance—of pain and misery and death; but in another form, the superior (*parā*), Nature's is the Law of Knowledge, that is to say, of happiness, immunity and and immortality, not elsewhere in another world and in a transcendent consciousness, but here below on the physical earth in a physical body.

The whole question then is this—how far has this Higher Nature been a reality with us, to what extent do we live and move and have our being in it. It is when the normal existence, our body, our life and our mentality have all adopted and absorbed the substance of the Higher Prakriti and become it, when all the modes of Inferior Prakriti have been discarded and annihilated, or rather, have been purified and made to grow into the modes of the Higher Prakriti, that our terrestrial life can become a thing of absolute beauty and perfect perfection.

If, on the contrary, any part of us belongs to the Inferior Nature, even if the larger part dwells in some higher status of Nature, even then we are not immune to the attacks that come from the inferior Nature. Those whom we usually call pious or virtuous or honest have still a good part of them imbedded in the Lower Nature, in various degrees they are yet its vassals; they owe allegiance to the three gunas, be it even to sattwa—sattwa is also a movement in Inferior Nature;

they are not free. Has not Sri Krishna said: *Traigunyaṣayā vedā nīstraigunyo bhavāṛjuna*¹ ? The only thing we must remember is that freedom from the gunas does not necessarily mean an absolute cessation of the play of Prakriti. Being in the gunas we must know how to purify and change them, transmute them into the higher and divine potentials.

This is a counsel of perfection, one would say. But there is no other way out. If humanity is to be saved, if it is at all to progress, it can be only in this direction. Buddha's was no less a counsel of perfection. He saw the misery of man, the three great maladies inherent in life and his supreme compassion led him to the discovery of a remedy, a radical remedy, —indeed it could remove the malady altogether, for it removed the patient also. What we propose is, in this sense, something less drastic. Ours is not a path of escape, although that too needs heroism, but of battle and conquest and lordship.

It is not to say that other remedies—less radical but more normal to human nature—cannot be undertaken in the meanwhile. The higher truths do not rule out the lower. These too have their place and utility in Nature's integral economy. An organisation based on science and ethicism can be of help as a palliative and measure of relief; it may be even immediately necessary under the circumstances, but however imperative at the moment it does not go to the root of the matter.

¹ "The action of the three gunas is the subject matter of the Veda; but do thou become free from the triple guna, O Arjuna."—*The Gita*, II. 45

Origin and Nature of Suffering

SUFFERING there is, some say, because the soul takes delight in it: if there was not the soul's delight behind, there would not be any suffering at all. There are still two other positions with regard to suffering which we do not deal with in the present context, namely, (1) that it does not exist at all, the absolute Ananda of the Brahman being the sole reality, suffering, along with the manifested world of which it is a part, is illusion pure and simple, (2) that suffering exists, but it comes not from soul or God but from the Antidivine: it is at the most tolerated by God and He uses it as best as He can for His purpose. That, however, is not our subject here. We ask then what delight can the soul take when the body is suffering, say, from cancer. If it is delight, it must be of a perverse variety. Is it not the whole effort of mankind to get rid of pain and suffering, make of our life and of the world, if possible, a visible play of pure and undefiled Ananda?

On the other hand, we do find that suffering is not always mere suffering, that it can be turned into a thing of joy; it is a fact proved in the lives of many a martyr and many a saint. Many indeed are those who have not only borne suffering passively but have welcomed it and courted it with happiness and delight. If it is said it is a perverse kind of pleasure, and if one wishes to hang it by calling it *masochism*, well, we do not solve the problem in that way, we seek to hide it behind a big word; it is at the most a point of view. What agrees with one's temperament (or prejudices) one calls natural and what one does not like appears to him perverse. Another person may have a different temperament and accordingly a different vocabulary.

An ascetic chastising himself with all kinds of rigours, a

patriot immolating himself relentlessly at the altar of his motherland, a *satyāgrahi* fasting to death does not merely suffer, but takes a delight in suffering. He does so because he holds that there is something greater than this preoccupation of avoiding pain and suffering, than this ordinary round of a life made of the warp and woof of enjoyment and disappointment. There is a greater delight that transcends these common vital norms, the dualities of the ordinary life. In the case of the ascetic, the martyr, the patriot, the delight is in an ideal—moral, religious or social. All that can be conceded here is that the suffering voluntarily courted does not cease to be suffering, is not itself transmuted into or felt as delight but that it is suppressed or dominated by the other feeling and consciousness.

True, but even this is an intermediate state. For there is another in which suffering is not merely suppressed but sublimated, wholly transmuted: there is then nothing else but delight, pure and entire. That is the soul state, the state of permanent dwelling in the Spirit. Now, we come back to the question why or how does the soul, being all delight, become in life the very opposite of its essential nature, a thing of misery, why does the spirit descend or condescend to take the form of matter: it is an old-world and eternal problem that has been asked and faced and answered in various ways through the ages.

Here is, briefly, how we view the question. The soul accepts a mortal life of pain and suffering, welcomes an apparent denial of its essential nature for two reasons: (1) to grow and increase in consciousness through such experiences,—pain and suffering being one variety of the fuel that tends the Fire that is our soul; and (2) to transfer its inalienable purity into Matter, by its secret pressure and influence gradually transform earthly life into a movement of its own divine state, the state of inviolable Bliss.

All experiences, all contacts with the forms and forces of Life and Matter act indeed as fuel to the flame of the soul's consciousness, whether they are good, bad or indifferent according to some outward view or standard. And in response to the nature and degree of the growth and increase demanded, does the soul choose its fuel, its external mode of life and

surroundings. If suffering and misery help to kindle and increase the flame, the soul has no *juguṃpsā*, repulsion for them. Indeed, it accepts the forms of misery in order to cure them, transform them, to bring out of them their original norms of beauty and bliss of which they are a degradation and an aberration.

The Tragic Spirit in Nature

THE wages of sin, it is said, is death. Well, it can, with equal if not greater truth, be said that the wages of virtue too is death! It seems as though on this mortal earth nothing great or glorious can be achieved which is not marred somehow or other, sometime or other. The blazon of virtue goes very rarely without a bar sinister branded across. Some kind of degradation, ignominy or frustration always attends or rounds off the spectacle of wonder. In the moral world too there seems to exist an inexorable law that action and reaction are equal in degree and opposite in kind.

The glorious First Consul and Emperor did not end in a blaze of glory: he had to live and die as the commonest of prisoners. Even his great prototype, the mighty Caesar, did not meet a different fate—he too fell—

O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,¹

A Jeanne d'Arc, another glorious creature, Deliverer of France, the sweetest thing that ever put on a human body, was burnt as a witch. Socrates had to drink the hemlock for having brought down heavenly knowledge upon earth. The Christ, God's own son and beloved, perished on the Cross. Krishna, the Avatara, was killed by a chance arrow; and Arjuna, the peerless hero of Kurukshetra, Krishna's favourite, had to see days when he could not even lift his own bow with which he once played havoc. And in our own days, a Rama-krishna, who could cure souls could not cure his own cancer.

¹ Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Sc. II

This is the "tears of things"—spoken of by a great poet—the tragedy that is lodged in the hearts of things.

There runs a pessimistic vein in Nature's movement. Due to the original Inconscience out of which she is built and also because of a habit formed through millenniums it is not possible for her to expect or envisage anything else than decay, death and frustration in the end or on the whole. To every rise there must be a fall, a crest must end in a trough. Nature has not the courage nor the faculty to look for any kind of perfection upon earth. Not that within her realm one cannot or should not try for the good, the noble, even the perfect, but one must be ready to pay the price. Good there is and may be, but it is suffered only on payment of its Danegeld to Evil. That is the law of sacrifice that seems to be fundamental to Nature's governance.

The Evil, we have said, is nothing else than the basis of unconsciousness or Inconscience in Nature. It is this which pulls the being—whatever structure of consciousness can be reared upon it—down to decay and frustration. It is the force of gravitation or inertia. Matter is unconsciousness; the body, formed basically of matter, is unconsciousness too. The natural tendency of Matter is towards disintegration and dissolution; the body, therefore, is mortal—*bhasmāntamidam sarīram*. The scope and range of mortality is measured by the scope and range of unconsciousness. Matter is the most concrete and solid form of unconsciousness; but it casts its shadow upon the higher levels too—life and mind always lie in the penumbra of this original evil.

A great personality means a great rise in consciousness; therefore it means also a strain upon the normal consciousness and hence a snap or scission sometime and somewhere. As the poet describes the tragic phenomenon—

—poised on the unreachable abrupt
snow-solitary ascent
Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable Light,
then ceases broken and spent,¹ . . .

The tragedy can happen in either of two ways. The in-

¹ Sri Aurobindo: "In Horis Aeternum", *Collected Poems & Plays*

dividual's own unconsciousness can reach and overthrow and spoil his higher poise, or the collective unconsciousness too can invade and overwhelm the individual in his high status, who is declared, not unoften, the highbrow, an enemy of the people—although atonement is sometimes attempted at a late period (as in the case of the Christ or Jeanne d'Arc). A way, however, was discovered in India by which one could avoid this life's inevitable tragic dénouement. It was very simple, viz, to rise up from the inert ignorant unconsciousness, rise sufficiently high and fly or shoot into the orbits of other suns from where there is no more downfall, being totally free from all earthly downpull.

But this need not be the only solution. Matter (the basic unconsciousness) was the master in this material world because, it was not properly faced and negotiated. One sought to avoid and bypass it. It was there Sphinx-like and none stopped to answer its riddle. The mystery is this. Matter, material Nature that is dubbed unconsciousness is not really so. That is only an appearance. Matter is truly *inconscient*, that is to say, it has an inner core of consciousness which is its true reality. This hidden flame of consciousness should be brought out from its cave and made manifest, dynamic on the surface. Then it will easily and naturally agree to submit to the higher law of Immortality. This would mean a reconditioning, a transmutation of the very basis of mind and life. The material foundation, the body conditions thus changed will bring about that status of the wholeness of consciousness which holds and stabilises the Divine in the human frame, which never suffers from any scar or diminution even in its terrestrial embodiment.

The Soul's Odyssey

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home¹:...

RARELY has a poet—a secular poet, I mean—given utterance to deep spiritual and occult truth with such clarity and felicity. It is, however, quite open to doubt whether Wordsworth himself was fully cognisant of the truth he expressed; the words that were put into his mouth carry a significance and a symbolism considerably beyond what his mind seemed to have received and understood. The passage may be taken as one more illustration of Matthew Arnold's characterisation of Wordsworth's genius at its best, it is then Nature herself that takes up the pen and writes for the poet.

The deep spiritual truth we are referring to is the Odyssey of the human soul. And it is also an occult phenomenon happening in the world of the inner reality. The Soul's own home is in God, is God; for it is part and parcel of the divine consciousness, it is essentially one in being and nature with the supreme Reality. It is a nucleus, a centre of individuation, a projection in a particular name and form of the infinite and eternal Being and Consciousness and Bliss on this side of manifestation or evolutionary Nature. Being in and with the Divine, merged within it, the Soul has, at the same time, its own

¹ Wordsworth: *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*

proper domain, exclusively its own, and its own inalienable identity. It is the domain where the Soul enjoys its *swarājya*, its absolute freedom, dwelling in its native light and happiness and glory. But the story changes, the curve of its destiny takes a sudden new direction when it comes down upon earth, when it inhabits a mortal body. Within the body, it no longer occupies its patent frontal position, but withdraws behind a veil, as it were: it takes its stand behind or within the depth of the heart, as spiritual practice experiences it. It hides there, as in a cavern, closed in now by the shades of the prison-house which its own body and life and mind build round it. Yet it is not wholly shut out or completely cut off; for from its secret home it exerts its influence which gradually, slowly, very slowly indeed, filters through—bathes, clarifies, illumines the encasement, makes it transparent and docile in the end. For that is the Soul's ultimate function and fulfilment.

In the meanwhile, however, "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." A physical incarnation clouds the soul-consciousness and involves loss of memory, amnesia. The soul's travail therefore in a physical body is precisely to regain the memory of what has been forgotten. Spiritual discipline means at bottom this remembering, and all culture too means nothing more than that—that is also what Plato thought when he said that all knowledge, all true knowledge consists in reminiscence.

Man, in his terrestrial body, although fallen, because shrouded and diverted from his central being of light and fire, is yet not, as I have said, wholly forsaken and cut adrift. He always carries within him that radiant core through all the peregrinations of earthly sojourn. And though the frontal consciousness, the physical memory has no contact with it, there is a stream of inner consciousness that continues to maintain the link. That is the silver lining to the dark cloud that envelops and engulfs our normal life. And that is why at times—not unoften—there occurs a crack, a fissure in the crust of our earthly nature of ignorance and a tongue of flame leaps out—one or other perhaps of the seven sisters of which the Upanishad speaks. And then a mere man becomes a saint, a seer, a poet, a prophet, a hero. This is the flaming godhead whom we cherish within, Agni, the leader of our progressive life, the great Sacrifice, the child whom we

nourish, birth after birth, by all that we experience and do and achieve. To live normally and naturally in that fiery element—like the legendary Salamander—to mould one's consciousness and being, one's substance and constitution, even the entire cellular organisation into the radiant truth is the goal of man's highest aspiration, the ultimate end of Nature's evolutionary urge and the cycle of rebirth.

PART FOUR

PART FOUR

The Divine Man

THE core of Sri Aurobindo's teaching, the central pivot on which his Yoga and his work rest is the mystery of the Divine Descent—Spirit descending into Matter and becoming Matter, God coming down upon earth and becoming human, and as a necessary and inevitable consequence, Matter rising and being transformed into Spirit and man becoming God and Godlike.

This is a truth, a fact of creation—giving the whole clue to the riddle of this world—that has not been envisaged at all in the past, or otherwise overlooked and not given the value and importance that it has. Poets and seers, sages and saints along with common men from the very birth of humanity have mourned this vale of tears, this sorrowful transient earthly life, *anityam asukham lokam imam*¹, into which they have been thrown: they have wished and willed and endeavoured to change or reform or re-create it, but have always failed, and in the end, finding it ultimately incorrigible, concluded that escape was the only solution, the only issue, either like the sage going out into Nirvana, spiritual dissolution, or like the atheist stoically going down with a crumbling world into a material disintegration. The truth of the matter is, however, different as Sri Aurobindo sees it. The spectacle is not so gloomy and irremediable. The world has a future and man has hope.

The world is not doomed nor man past cure; for it is not that the world has been merely created by God but that God has become and is the world at the same time: man is not merely God's creature but that he is made of God's substance and is God himself. The Spirit has shed its supreme consciousness, that is to say, overtly has become dead matter; God has

¹ *The Gita*, IX. 33

veiled his effulgent infinity and has taken up a human figure. The Divine has clothed his inviolable felicity in pain and suffering, has become an earthly creature, you and me, a mortal of mortals. And thus, viewed in another perspective because Matter is essentially Spirit, because man is essentially God, therefore Matter can be resolved and transformed into Spirit and man too can become utterly divine. The urge of the spiritual consciousness that is the essence of matter even, the massed energy imbedded or lying frozen in it, manifests itself in the forward drive of evolution that brings out gradually, step by step, the various modes of the consciousness in different degrees and potentials till the original summit is revealed.

But there is a still closer mystery, the mystery of mysteries. There has not been merely a general descent, the descent of a world-force on a higher plane into another world-force on a lower plane; but that there is the descent of the individual, the personal Godhead into and as an earthly human being. The Divine born as a man and leading the life of a man among us and as one of us, the secret of Divine Incarnation is the supreme secret. That is the mechanism adopted by the Divine to cure and transmute human ills—himself becoming a man, taking upon himself the burden of the evil that vitiates and withers life and working it out in and through himself. Something of this truth has been caught in the Christian view of Incarnation. God sent upon earth his only begotten son to take upon himself the sins of man, suffer vicariously for him, pay the ransom and thus liberate him, so that he may reach salvation, procure his seat by the side of the Father in Heaven. Man corrupted as he is by an original sin cannot hope by his own merit to achieve salvation. He can only admit his sin and repent and wait for the Grace to save him. The Indian view of Incarnation laid more stress upon the positive aspect of the matter, viz, the rôle of the Incarnation as the inaugurator and establisher of a new order in life—*dharmasamsthāpanārthāya*. The Avatar brings down and embodies a higher principle of human organisation, a greater consciousness which he infuses into the existing pattern, individual or collective, which has served its purpose, has become otiose and time-barred and needs to be remodelled, has been at the most preparatory to

something else. The Avatar means a new revelation and the uplift of the human consciousness into a higher mode of being. The physical form he takes signifies the physical pressure that is exerted for the corroboration and fixation of the inner illumination that he brings upon earth and in the human frame. The Indian tradition has focussed its attention upon the Good—*śreyas*—and did not consider it essential to dwell upon the Evil. For one who finds and sees the Good always and everywhere, the Evil does not exist. Sri Aurobindo lays equal emphasis on both the aspects. Naturally, however, he does not believe in an original evil, incurable upon earth and in earthly life. In conformity with the ancient Indian teaching he declares the original divinity of man: it is because man is potentially and essentially divine that he can become actually and wholly divine. The Bible speaks indeed of man becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect: but that is due exclusively to the Grace showered upon man, not because of any inherent perfection in him. But in according full divinity to man, Sri Aurobindo does not minimise the part of the undivine in him. This does not mean any kind of Manicheism: for Evil, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not coeval or coterminous with the Divine, it is a later or derivative formation under given conditions, although within the range and sphere of the infinite Divine. Evil exists as a stern reality; even though it may be temporary and does not touch the essential reality, it is not an illusion nor can it be ignored, brushed aside or bypassed as something superficial or momentary and of no importance. It has its value, its function and implication. It is real, but it is not irremediable. It is contrary to the Divine but not contradictory. For even the Evil in its inmost substance carries or is the reality which it opposes or denies outwardly. Did not the very first of the apostles of Christ deny his master at the crucial moment? As we have said, evil is a formation necessitated by certain circumstances, the circumstances changed, the whole disposition as at present constituted changes automatically and fundamentally.

The Divine then descends into the earth-frame, not merely as an immanent and hidden essence—*sarvabhūtāntāratmā*—but as an individual person embodying that essence—*mānuṣīm tanum āśritam*. Man too, however earthly and impure he may

be, is essentially the Divine himself, carries in him the spark of the supreme consciousness that he is in his true and highest reality. That is how in him is bridged the gulf that apparently exists between the mortal and the immortal, the Infinite and the Finite, the Eternal and the Momentary, and the Divine too can come into him and become, so to say, his lower self.

The individual or personal Divine leaves his home of all bliss—Vaikuntha—forgets himself and enters into this world of all misery; but this does not mean that he becomes wholly the Man of Misery: he encompasses all misery within himself, penetrates as well into the stuff and substance of all misery, but suffuses all that with the purifying and transforming pressure of his own supreme consciousness. And yet pain and suffering are real, cruelly real, even to the Divine Man. Just as the ordinary human creature suffers and agonises in spite of the divine essence in him, in spite of his other deeper truth and reality, his soul of inalienable bliss, his psychic being, the Divine too suffers in the same way in spite of his divinity. This double line of consciousness, this system of parallels running alongside each other, interacting upon each other (even intersecting each other, when viewed in a frame of infinity) gives the whole secret mechanism of creation, its purpose, its working and its fulfilment. It is nothing else than the gradual replacement or elimination, elevation or sublimation of the elements on one line that are transmuted into those of the other. The Divine enters into the Evil to root out the Evil and plant there or release and fructify the seed of Divinity lying covered over and lost in the depths of dead inconscience.

The Divine descends as an individual person fundamentally to hasten the evolutionary process and to complete it; he takes the human form to raise humanity to divinity. The fact and the nature of the process have been well exemplified in Sri Ramakrishna who, it is said, took up successively different lines of spiritual discipline and by a supreme and sovereign force of concentration achieved realisation in each line in the course of a few days what might take in normal circumstances years or even lives to do. The Divine gathers and concentrates in himself the world-force, the Nature-Energy—even like a

dynamo—and focuses and canalises it to give it its full, integral and absolute effectivity. And mortal pain he accepts, and swallows the poison of ignorant life—even like Nilakantha Shiva—to transmute it into ecstasy and immortality. The Divine Mother sank into the earth-nature of a human body:

Of her pangs she made a mystic poignant sword...

Hoping her greater being to implant
That heaven might native grow on mortal soil.¹

But this is God's share—*la part de Dieu*; for man too as man has to do his part. Because the Divine descending and accomplishing the work does not mean either of two things: first, it does not mean that it is a sudden miracle, *deus ex machina*, a fiat from the heaven which upsets and bears down everything before it and practically has no relation, logical or causal with what precedes and what follows. It is, on the contrary, as we have said, the culmination of a long process, the seal of fulfilment set upon a steady preparation and travailing growth. The Divine descends when the time is ripe, that is to say, when forces and instruments have been developed, refined, sharpened and tempered, so that they can harness and wield the Power from above. But for the preparation, the necessary conditions being there, the Grace would not have descended, although it is also true that but for the Grace, the culmination and the utter fulfilment would not have come about—there would have been only a vicious circle or an unending seesaw. Next, the Descent does not mean either that following upon it the whole business is done and completed automatically and immediately or nothing is left to be done any more. Not so. It means that what has been so long practically beyond reach, towards which one had to move with uncertainty and vague effort and in a roundabout way, as though through a trackless virgin forest or across an uncharted sea, has now been brought nearer and closer to human grasp, is now made part and parcel of earth's familiar atmosphere, so that any human being who genuinely aspires and looks for it can find it about him: there is just a thin veil which has to be put aside a little,

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri*, Book I, Canto I

into which a little opening is to be made and one comes in contact with or even enters into what one seeks. This means that the Grace has leaned down to man, but man too has at least to stretch his arms to touch and embrace it. Furthermore, to make that Grace permanently active and real in the normal consciousness, one has to labour, work out in fact what is given potentially: the seed is planted for him, it will grow and bloom and come to fruition provided necessary care and attention are given to the soil that bears it.

Thus then the embodied human person who has the embodied Divine Person before his eyes must know how to instal and incorporate the Divine Person in him, in his body and physical existence. That was perhaps the mystery sought to be conveyed in the Christian sacrament of transubstantiation. The bread and wine that the initiate has to take in represent—are or become actually and physically, as the Christian mystics assert—the flesh and blood of Christ. One has to become the Divine Person in flesh and blood, wholly and integrally. As the fossil is a transmutation in stone, grain by grain, of a living body—organic elements eliminated and replaced by the inorganic in the very atomic structure and constitution—even so, the living human structure, the mental, vital and physical formation will be translated, grain by grain, atom by atom into the divine substance by the infusion and imposition of the Divine figure.

The Christian mystics themselves, however, do not seem to have aimed at real physical transubstantiation—although that might have been at the back of the older Hebrew sacrament of the Eucharist; the perfection sought by them was to be enjoyed in Heaven in company of the Father and not on this earth and in this human body: it was more a sublimation than a transformation that was their goal. The flesh for them was always too weak.

Human Progress

CREATION has evolved. That is to say, there has been a growth and unfoldment and progress. From nebulae to humanity the march cannot but be called an advance, a progress, in more senses than one. But the question is about man. Has man advanced, progressed since his advent upon earth? If so, in what manner, to what extent? Man has been upon earth for the last two million years, they say. From what has happened before him in the course of Nature's evolution, it is legitimate to infer that man too, in his turn, has moved forward in the line towards growth and development. In fact, if we admit that man started life as a savage or jungle-man or ape-man, and look at him as he is today, we have perforce to acknowledge that he has not merely changed but progressed too. The question to be answered is in what sense this progress has been made.

Modern knowledge has taught us that what marks the growth of man is his use of tools. An animal has nothing else than its own limbs as its all-serving tool. Man emerged as man the day he knew how to use tools as an extension of his limbs. And the cycles of human growth have, in consequence, been marked off by the type of tools used. As we all know, anthropologists tell us, there have been four such cycles or ages: (1) the Old Stone Age, (2) the New Stone Age, (3) the Bronze Age and (4) the Iron Age.

In the first age, which is by far the longest period, a period of slow and difficult preparation, man had his first lessons in a conscious and victorious dealing with Nature. The day when he first started chipping a stone was a red-letter day for him; for, by that very gesture he began shredding his purely animal vesture. And when he not only chipped but succeeded in

grinding and polishing a piece of stone, he moved up one step further and acquired definitely his humanity. Again, ages afterwards when his hand could wield and manipulate as it liked not only a stone but a metal, his skill and dexterity showed a development unique in its kind, establishing and fixing man's manhood as a new emergent factor. In this phase also there was a first period of training and experiment, the period of craftsmanship in bronze; with the age of iron, man's arms and fingers attained a special deftness and a conscious control directed from a cranium centre which has become by now a model of rich growth and complex structure and marvellous organisation. The impetus towards more and more efficiency in the making and handling of tools has not ceased: the craftsmanship in iron soon led to the discovery of steel and steel industry. The temper and structure of steel are symbolic and symptomatic of the temper and structure of the brain that commands the weapon—strong, supple, resistant, resilient, capable of fineness and sharpness and trenchancy to an extraordinary degree.

This growing fineness and efficiency of the tool has served naturally to develop and enrich man's external possession and dominion. But this increasing power and dominion over Nature is not the most important consequence involved; it is only indicative of still greater values, something momentous, something subjective, pregnant with far-reaching possibilities. For the physical change is nothing compared with the psychological change, the change in the consciousness. In taking up his tool to chip a stone man has started hewing out and moulding entire Nature: he has become endowed with the sense of independence and agency. An animal is a part and parcel of Nature, has no life and movement apart from the life and movement of Nature—even like Wordsworth's child of Nature—

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.¹

An animal does not separate itself from Nature, exteriorise it and then seek to fashion it as he wants, try to make it yield things he requires. Man is precisely man because he has just

¹ "A slumber did my spirit seal", *Miscellaneous Poems*

this sense of self and of not-self and his whole life is the conquest of the not-self by the self: this is the whole story of his evolution. In the early stages his sense of agency and selfhood is at its minimum. The rough-hewn flint instruments are symbolic of the first attempts of the brain to set its impress upon crude and brute nature. The history of man's artisan-ship, which is the history of his civilisation, is also the history of his growing self-consciousness. The consciousness in its attempt to react upon nature separated itself from Nature, and at first stood over against it and then sought to stand over and above it. In this process of extricating itself from the sheath in which it was involved and fused, it came back upon itself, became more and more aware of its freedom and individual identity and agency.

The question is now asked how far this self-consciousness—given to man by his progress from stone to steel—has advanced and what is its future. The crucial problem is whether man has progressed in historical times. Granted that man with an iron tool is a more advanced type of humanity than man with a chipped stone tool, it may still be enquired whether he has made any real advance since the day he learnt to manipulate metal. If by advance or progress we mean efficiency and multiplication of tools, then surely there can be no doubt that Germany of today (perhaps now we have to say Germany of yesterday and America of today) is the most advanced type of humanity—indeed they do make the claim in that country.

So it is argued that man may have built up more and more efficient organisation in his outer life, he may have learnt to wield a greater variety and wealth of tools and instruments in an increasing degree of refinement and power; but this does not mean that his character, his nature or even the broad mould of his intelligence has changed or progressed. The records and remains of Predynastic Egypt or of Proto-Aryan Indus valley go to show that those were creations of civilised men, as civilised as any modern people. The mind that produced the Rig Veda or the Book of the Dead or conceived the first pyramid is, in essential power of intelligence, no whit inferior to any modern scientific brain. Hence a distinction is sometimes made between culture and civilisation; what the moderns have achieved is progress with regard to civilisation,

that is to say, the outer paraphernalia; but as regards culture a Plato, a Lao-tse, a Yajnavalkya are names to which we still bow down.

One can answer, however, that even if in the last eight or ten thousand years which, they say, is the extent of the present cycle, the civilised or cultural life of humanity has not changed much, this does not mean that it cannot, will not change. The paleolithic age, it appears, covered a period of thirty to forty thousand years; the neolithic age also must have lasted some fifteen thousand years. The metal age is now not more than ten thousand years. So it does not seem to be too late; perhaps it is just time for another radical and crucial change to come as the chronological scheme would seem to demand.

We propose, however, to reopen the question and enquire if there has not been some kind of radical change or progress in the make-up of human nature and civilisation even within the span of historical times. This reminds us of the remarkable conclusion or discovery made by the much maligned and much adulated Psycho-analysts.

Jung speaks of two kinds or grades of thinking: (1) the directed thinking and (2) the wishful thinking; one conscious and objective, the other automatic and subjective. The first is the modern or scientific thinking, the second the old-world mythopœic thinking. These two lines of mental movement mark off two definite stages in the cultural history of man. Down to the Middle Ages man's mental life was moved and coloured by his *libido*—desire soul; it is with the Renaissance that he began to free his mind from the libido and transfer and transform the libido into non-egoistic and realistic thinking. In simpler psychological terms we can say that man's mentality was coloured and modulated by his biological make-up out of which it had emerged; the age of modernism and scientism began with the development of a rigorous rationalism which means a severance and transcendence of the biological antecedent.

In other words, it can be said that the older humanity was intuitive and instinctive, while modern humanity is rationalistic. Now it has been questioned whether this change or re-orientation is a sign of progress, whether it has not been at the most a mixed blessing. Many idealists and reformers frankly

view the metamorphosis with anxiety. Gerald Heard vehemently declares that the rationalism of the modern age is a narrowing down of the consciousness to a superficial movement, a foreshortening, and a top-heavy specialisation which means stagnation, decay and death. He would rather release the tension in the strangulation of consciousness, even if it means a slight coming down to the anterior level of instinct and intuition, but of more plasticity and less specialisation: it is, he says, only in conditions of suppleness and variability, of life organised yet sufficiently free that the forces of evolution can act fruitfully. It has also been pointed out that *homo sapiens* is not a direct descendant of *homo neanderthalis* who was already a far too specialised being, but of a stock anterior to it which was still uncertain, wavering, groping towards a definite emergence.

Now, these two positions—of Jung and of Heard—offer us a good basis upon which we can try to estimate the nature of man's progress in historical times. Both refer to a crucial change in human consciousness, a far-reaching change having no parallel since it invented the metal tool. The change means the appearance of pure intelligence in man, a change, as we may say, in modern terms, in the system of reference, from biological co-ordinates to those of pure reason. Only Jung thinks that the reorganisation of the human consciousness is to happen precisely round the focus of pure reason, while Gerald Heard is doubtful about the efficacy of this faculty—of “directive thinking”, as Jung puts it—if it is to lead to overspecialisation, which means the swelling of one member and atrophy of the rest; a greater and supreme direction he seeks elsewhere in a transcendence of intelligence and reason which, besides, is bound to happen in the course of evolution.

We characterise the change as a special degree or order of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, we have seen, is the *sine qua non* of humanity. It is the faculty or power by and with which man appears on earth and maintains himself as such, as a distinct species. Thanks to this faculty man has become the tool-making animal, the artisan—*homo faber*. But on emerging from the original mythopœic to the scientific status man has become doubly self-conscious. Self-consciousness means to be aware of oneself as standing separate from and against the

environment and the world and acting upon it as a free agent, exercising one's deliberate will. Now the first degree of self-consciousness displayed itself in a creative activity by which consciousness remained no longer a suffering organon, but became a growing and directing, a reacting and new-creating agent. Man gained the power to shape the order of Nature according to the order of his inner will and consciousness. This creative activity, the activity of the artisan, developed along two lines: first, artisanship with regard to one's own self, one's inner nature and character, and secondly, with regard to the external nature, the not-self. The former gave rise to mysticism and Yoga and was especially cultivated in India, while the second has led us to Science, man's physical mastery, which is the especial field of European culture.

Now the second degree of self-consciousness to which we referred is the scientific consciousness *par excellence*. It can be described also as the spirit and power of experimentation, or more precisely, of scientific experimentation: it involves generically the process with which we are familiar in the domain of industry and is termed "synthetic", that is to say, it means the skill and capacity to create the conditions under which a given phenomenon can be repeated at will. Hence it means a perfect knowledge of the process of things—which again is a dual knowledge: (1) the knowledge of the steps gradually leading to the result and (2) the knowledge that has the power to resolve the result into its antecedent conditions. Thus the knowledge of the *mechanism*, the detailed working of things, is scientific knowledge, and therefore scientific knowledge can be truly said to be mechanistic knowledge, in the best sense of the term. Now the knowledge of the ends and the knowledge of the means (to use a phrase of Aldous Huxley) and the conscious control over either have given humanity a new degree of self-consciousness.

It can be mentioned here that there can be a knowledge of ends without a corresponding knowledge of means, even there can be a control over ends without a preliminary control over means—perhaps not to perfection, but to a sufficient degree of practical utility. Much of the knowledge—especially secular and scientific—in ancient times was of this order; what we mean to say is that the knowledge was more instinc-

tive or intuitive than rational or intellectual. In that knowledge the result only, the end that it to say, was the chief aim and concern, the means for attaining the end was, one cannot perhaps say, ignored, but slurred or slipped over as it were: the process was thus involved or understood, not expressed or detailed out. Thus we know of some mathematical problems to which correct solutions were given of which the process is not extant or lost as some say. Our suggestion is that there was in fact very little of the process as we know it now—the solution was reached *per saltum*, that is to say, somehow, in the same manner as we find it happening even today in child prodigies.

One can point out however that even before the modern scientific age, there was an epoch of pure intellectual activity, as represented, for example, by scholasticism. The formal intellectualism which was the gift of the Greek sophists or the Mimamsakas and grammarians in ancient India has to be recognised as a pure mental movement, freed from all life value or biological bias. What then is the difference? What is the new characteristic element brought in by the modern scientific intellectualism?

The old intellectualism generally and on the whole, was truly formal and even to a great extent verbal. In other words, it sought to find norms and categories in the mind itself and impose them upon objects, objects of experience, external or internal. The first discovery of the pure mind, the joy of indulging in its own free formations led to an abstraction that brought about a cleavage between mind and nature, and when a harmony was again attempted between the two, it meant an imposition of one (the Mind) upon another (Matter), a subsumption of the latter under the former. Such scholastic formalism, although it has the appearance of a movement of pure intellect, free from the influence of instinctive or emotive reactions, cannot but be, at bottom, a mythopœic operation, in the Jungian phraseology; it is not truly objective in the scientific sense. The scientific procedure is to find Nature's own categories—the constants, as they are called—and link up mind and intellect with that reality. This is the Copernican revolution that Science brought about in the modern outlook. Philosophers like Kant or Berkeley may say

another thing and even science itself just nowadays may appear hesitant in its bearings. But that is another story which it is not our purpose to consider here and which does not change the fundamental position. We say then that the objectivity of the scientific outlook, as distinguished from the abstract formalism of old-world intellectualism, has given a new degree of mental growth and is the basis of the "mechanistic" methodology of which we have been speaking.

Indeed, what we lay stress upon is the methodology of modern scientific knowledge—the apparatus of criticism and experimentation.

We have said that this "methodologism"—the knowledge of means and the consequent control over means—the hallmark of modern scientific knowledge—is a new degree of self-consciousness which is the special characteristic of the human consciousness. Put philosophically, we can say that the discovery of the *subject* and its growing affirmation as an independent factor in a subject-object relation marks the evolutionary course of the human consciousness.

A still further unveiling seems to be in progress now. The subject has discovered itself as separate from the observed object and still embracing it: but a given subject-object relationship in its turn again is being viewed as itself an object to another subject consciousness, a super-subject. That way lie the ever widening horizons of consciousness opened up by Yoga and spiritual discipline.

In other words, the self-consciousness which marks off man as the highest of living beings as yet evolved by Nature is still not her highest possible instrumentation. As has been experienced and foreseen by Yogins in all ages and climes and as it is being borne in upon the modern mind more and more imperatively, this self-consciousness has to be consciously transcended, lifted, transmuted—worked out into the super-consciousness. Such is Nature's evolutionary *nisus* and such is the truth and fact man is being driven to face in his inner individual consciousness as well as outer collective life.

We can thus note, broadly speaking, three stages in the human cycle of Nature's evolution. The first was the period of emergence of self-consciousness and the trials and experiments it went through to establish and confirm itself. The ancient

civilisations represented this character of the human spirit. The subject freeing itself more and more from its environmental tegument, still living and moving within it and dynamically reacting upon it—this was the character we speak of. Next came the period when the free and dynamic subject feeling itself no more tied down to its natural objective sphere sought lines of development and adventure on its own account. This was the age of speculation and of scholasticism in philosophy and intellectual inquiry and of alchemy in natural science—a period roughly equated with the Middle Ages. The Scientific Age coming last seeks to re-establish a junction and co-ordination between the free and dynamic self-consciousness and the mode and pattern of its objective field, involving a greater enrichment on one side—the subjective consciousness—and on the other, the objective environment, a corresponding change and effective reorganisation.

The present age which ushers a fourth stage—significantly called *turiya* or the transcendent, in Indian terminology—is pregnant with a fateful crisis. The stage of self-consciousness to which scientific development has arrived seems to land in a cul-de-sac, a blind alley: Science also is faced, almost helplessly, with the antinomies of reason that Kant discovered long ago in the domain of speculative philosophy. The way out, for a further growth and development and evolution, lies in a supersession of the self-consciousness, an elevation into a superconsciousness—as already envisaged by Yogis and Mystics everywhere—which will give a new potential and harmony to the human consciousness.

This superconsciousness is based upon a double movement of sublimation and integration which are precisely the two things basically aimed at by present-day psychology to meet the demands of new facts of consciousness. The rationalisation, specialisation or foreshortening of consciousness, mentioned above, is really an attempt at sublimation of the consciousness, its purification and ascension from baser—animal and vegetal—confines: only, ascension does not mean alienation, it must mean a gathering up of the lower elements also into their higher modes. Integration thus involves a descent, but it has to be pointed out, not merely or exclusively that, as Jung and his school seem to say. Certainly one has to see and recognise

the aboriginal, the infra-rational elements imbedded in our nature and consciousness, the roots and foundations that lie buried under the super-structure that Evolution has erected. But that recognition must be accompanied by an upward look and sense: indeed it is healthy and fruitful only on condition that it occurs in a consciousness open to an infiltration of light coming from summits not only of the mind but above the mind. If we go back, it must be with a light that is ahead of us: that is the sense of evolution.

Consciousness as Energy

1

A LIVE wire—through which an electric current, say of several thousand volts, is passing—looks quite innocent, motionless, inactive, almost inert. The appearance, needless to say, is deceptive. Even so, the *still life* of a Yogin. Action does not consist merely in mechanical motion visible to the eye: intra-atomic movements that are subtle, invisible, hard to detect even by the most sensitive instruments, possess a tremendous potency, even to unimaginable degrees. Likewise in man, the extent of muscular flexions does not give the measure or potential of his activity. One cannot say that the first-line infantryman who rushes and charges, shoots, bayonets, kills and is killed is more active and dynamic than the general who sits quiet behind in a cabin and merely sends out orders. Vivekananda wandered about the whole of India, crossed the seas, traversed continents, undertook whirlwind campaigns—talking, debating, lecturing: it was a life superbly rich in muscular movements. By his side, Ramakrishna would appear quite tame—inactive, “introvert”: fewer physical displacements or muscular exercises marked his life. And yet, ask anyone who is in touch with the inner life of these great souls, he will tell you, Vivekananda is only a spark from the mighty and concentrated Energy that Ramakrishna was.

What is this spiritual or Yogic Energy? Ordinary people, people with a modern mind, would concede at the most that there are two kinds of activity: (1) real activity—physical action, work, labour with muscle and nerve, and (2) passive activity—activity of mind and thought. According to the pragmatic standard especial, if not entire, importance is given

the the first category; the other category, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought", is held at a discount. The *thoughtful* people are philosophers at the most, they are ineffectual angels in this workaday world of ours. We need upon earth people of sterner stuff, dynamic people who are not thought-bound, but know how to apply and execute their ideas, whatever they may be. Lenin was great, not because he had revolutionary ideas, but because he gave a muscular frame to them. Such people alone are the pragmatic, dynamic, useful category of humanity. The others are, according to the more radical leftist view, merely parasitic, and according to a more generous liberal view, chiefly decorative elements in human society. Mind-energy can draw dream pictures, beautiful perhaps, but inane; it is only muscular energy that gives a living and material body—a local habitation and a name—to what otherwise would be airy nothing.

Energy, however, is not merely either muscular (physical) or cerebral. There are energies subtler than thought and yet more dynamic than the muscle (or the electric pile). One such, for example, is vital energy, although orthodox biochemists do not believe in any kind of vitalism that is something more than mere physico-chemical reaction. Indeed, this is the energy that counts in life; for it is this that brings about what we call success in the world. A man with push and go, as it is termed, is nothing but a person with abundant vital energy. But even of this energy there are gradations. It can be deep, controlled, organised or it can be hectic, effusive, confused: the latter kind expresses and spends itself often in mere external, nervous and muscular movements. Those, however, who are known as great men of action are precisely they who are endowed with life energy of the first kind.

The Yogi—the Hatha Yogi, the Raja Yogi, the Tantrik—seeks consciously to master this life energy, to possess and use it as he wills. The Yogi, the true Yogi, aims at a higher quality, a deeper potentiality of the life energy: it may be called the Inner Life Energy. This inner life energy is in a line with, is one with the universal life energy; therefore it is said when one possesses and controls this power one has command over the universal power. All other energies—visible, tangible, concretised and canalised—are particular formations and

embodiments of this mother energy. Even the most physical and material energies—mechanical, electrical, nervous, etc.—are all derivatives and lesser potentials of this fount and origin. The mastery of the inner vital energy is the whole secret of what is known as occultism, even magic, black or white, spell and other allied powers or miracles. The eight *siddhis* well known to the Yogis are the natural results of this mastery. With such a mastery the Yogi controls and guides his own destiny; he can also in the same way control and guide the destiny of others, even of peoples and humanity at large. That is the deeper meaning the great phrase of the Gita—*lokasaṁgraha*—carries. Indeed, great souls are precisely they who move with the upward current of Nature, in and through whom Nature works out vast changes, prepares the steps of evolution in the world and humanity.

But what again is this universal vital energy? This also is an instrument, not the ultimate agent. After all, vital energy is blind by itself; it moves instinctively or intuitively, as Bergson would say; it does not know consciously beforehand the next step it is going to take. Consciousness then is the secret. This is “the power behind the throne”, it is this to which the Upanishad refers in its analysis of the ultimate dynamics of things as the life of Life, *prāṇasya prāṇāh*.

It is the aim of all Yoga, spiritual discipline, finally to arrive at this consciousness, this supreme reality which is behind all existence, which is the source and the substance of all. It is in this Consciousness that the whole creation is rolled up and it is from this that it is rolled out. Only there are some paths of spiritual discipline that prefer and follow the movement of in-rolling and others that seek the one of out-rolling: the former is the path of *nivṛtti*, the latter that of *pravṛtti*.

Thus consciousness is not merely a status of being, but also a force of becoming. All that is to take form and be active, whether in the grossest, the material mode or in the most subtle, the ideative mode is originally a seed, a stress, a point of concentration of this consciousness. The Yogi becomes potentially all-powerful, because he is one with the All-Power, the Mother Consciousness. The perfect spiritual man not merely dwells with or is close to the Divine (*sālokya*), he is not merely made in the image of the Divine (*sārūpya*), and again

he is not merely unified and one with the Divine (*sāyujya*) but what is most marvellous, he has the same nature, that is to say, he has the same powers and capacities as the Divine (*sādharmya*).

The dynamic becoming, becoming a power and personality of the omnipotent Divine, is a secret well known to the Yogis and mystics. Only it has not been worked out in all its implications, not given the full value and importance rightfully due to it. The reason is that although the principle was discovered and admitted, the proper key had not been found that could release and manipulate the Energy at its highest potential and largest amplitude. Because the major tendency in the spiritual man till now has been rather to follow the path of *nivṛtti* than the path of *pravṛtti*, this latter path being more or less identified with the path of Ignorance. But there is a higher line of *pravṛtti* which means the manifestation of the Divine, not merely the expression of the inferior Nature.

2

The force of consciousness is not simply the force an idea or thought may have. The distinction between the two is not usually understood. In reality, however, thought or idea is a form of energy-action in the mind and mind is only one field or grade—not the most dynamic nor direct or immediate—among many for the play of consciousness, as I have already said. Mind energy, life energy, physical or material energy are various forms and stages in the expression of consciousness-energy (Chit-Tapas). The nature and function of consciousness-energy we may elucidate and understand in another way, by following a different line of its *modus vivendi*.

Consciousness has a fourfold potential. The first is the normal consciousness, which is predominantly mental; it is the sphere comprising movements of which man is usually and habitually aware. It is what the Upanishad names *jāgrat* or *jāgaritasthāna* and characterises as *bahihprajñā*: it is the waking state and has cognition only of external things. In other words, the consciousness here is wholly objectivised, externalised—"extrovert": it is also a strongly individualised formation, the

consciousness is hedged in, isolated and contoured by a protective ring, as it were, of a characteristically separative personality; it is a surface formation, a web made out of day-to-day sensations and thoughts, perceptions and memories, impressions and associations. It is a system of outward actions and reactions against or in the midst of one's actual environment. The second potential is that of the Inner Consciousness: its characteristic is that the consciousness here is no longer trenchantly separative and individual, narrowly and rigidly egoistic. It feels and sees itself as part of or one with the world consciousness. It looks upon its individuality as only a wave of the universal movement. It is also sometimes called the subliminal consciousness; for it plays below or behind the normal surface range of consciousness. It is made up of the residuary powers of the normal consciousness, the abiding vibrations and stresses that settle down and remain in the background and are not immediately required or utilised for life purposes: also it contacts directly energies and movements that well out of the universal life. The phenomena of clairvoyance and clairaudience, the knowledge of the past and the future and of other worlds and persons and beings, certain more dynamic movements such as distant influence and guidance and controlling without any external means, well known in all yogic disciplines, are various manifestations of the power of this Inner Consciousness. But there is not only an outward and an inner consciousness; there is also a deeper or nether consciousness. This is the great field that has been and is being explored by modern psychologists. It is called the subconscious, sometimes also the unconscious: but really it should be named the inconscient, for it is not altogether devoid of consciousness, but is conscious in its own way—the consciousness is involved or lost within itself or lies buried. It comprises those movements and impulsions, inclinations and dispositions that have no rational basis, on the contrary, have an irrational basis; they are not acquired or developed by the individual in his normal course of life experience, they are ingrained, lie imbedded in man's nature and are native to his original biological and physical make-up. As the human embryo recapitulates in the womb the whole history of man's animal evolution, even so the normal man, even the most

civilised and apparently the farthest from his ancient moorings and sources, enshrines in his cells, in a miraculously living manner, the memory of vast geological epochs, the great struggles and convulsions through which earth and its inhabitants have passed, the basic urges of the crude life force, its hopes, fears, desires, hungers that constitute the rudimental and aboriginal consciousness, the atavism that links the man of today not only to his primitive ancestry but even to the plant world—even perhaps to the mineral world—out of which his body cells have issued and evolved. Legends and fairy tales, mythologies and fables are a rationalised pattern and picture of the vibrations and urges that moved the original consciousness. It was a collective—a racial—and an aboriginal consciousness. The same lies *chromosomic*, one can almost say, in the constitution of the individual man of today. This region of the unconscious (or the inconscient) is a veritable field of force: it lies at the root of all surface dynamisms. The surface consciousness, *jāgrat*, is a very small portion of the whole, it is only the tip of the pyramid or an iceberg, the major portion lies submerged beyond our normal view. In reflex movements, in sudden unthinking outbursts, in dreams and day-dreams, this undercurrent is silhouetted and made visible and recognisable. Even otherwise, they exercise a profound influence upon all our conscious movements. This underground consciousness is the repository of the most dark and unenlightened elements that grew and flourished in the slime of man's original habitat. They are small, ugly, violent, anti-social, chaotic forces, their names are cruelty, lust, hunger, blind selfishness. Nowhere else than in this domain can the great Upanishadic truth find its fullest application—Hunger that is Death.

But this is the seamy side of Nature, there is also a sunny side. If there is a nadir, there must be a corresponding zenith. In the Vedic image, if man is born of the Dark Mother, he is also a child of the White Mother (*kr̥ṣṇa* and *svetī*). Or again, if Earth is our mother, the Heaven is our father—*dyaus me pitā matā pṛthivī iyam*. In other words, consciousness extends not in depth alone, but in height also—it is vertically extended, infinite both ways. As there is a subconsciousness or unconsciousness, so also there is at the other end superconsciousness.

Now this superconsciousness is the true origin of creation, although the apparent and objective creation starts with and is based upon Unconsciousness. All norms and archetypes belong to the superconsciousness; for the sake of material creation they are thrown down or cast as seed into the Unconscious and in this process they undergo a change, a deformation and aberration. All the major themes of dream myths and prehistoric legends which the psychologists claim to have found imbedded in man's subconscient consciousness are in fact echoes and mirages of great spiritual—superconscient—realities reflected here below. The theme of the Hero of the Dual Mother (Dark and Fair), of Creation and Sacrifice, these are, according to Jung, dramatisations of some fundamental movements and urges in the dark subconscient nature. Jung, however, throws a luminous suggestion in characterising the nature of this vast complex. The general sense, Jung says, is that of a movement forward, of a difficult journey, of a pull backward and downward, of yawning abysses that call, of a light that beckons. It is an effort, a travail of what lies imbedded and suppressed to come out into the open, into the normal consciousness and thus release an unhealthy tension, restore a balance in the individual's system. Modern psychology lays great stress upon the integration of personality. Most of the ills that human nature suffers from, they say, are due to this division or schism in it, a suppressed subconsciousness and an expressed consciousness seeking to express a negation of that subconsciousness. Modern psychology teaches that one should dive into the nether regions and face squarely whatever elements are there, help these to follow their natural bent to come up and see the light of the day. Only thus there can be established a unitary movement, an even consistency and an equilibrium throughout the entire consciousness and being.

So far so good. But two things are to be taken note of. First of all, the resolution of the normal conflict in man's consciousness, the integration of his personality, is not wholly practicable within the scope of the present nature and the field of the actual forces at play. That can give only a shadow of the true resolution and integration. A conscious envisaging of the conflicting forces, a calm survey of the submerged or side-tracked *libidos* in their true nature, a voluntary accep-

tance of these dark elements as a part of normal human nature, does not automatically make for their sublimation and purification or transformation. The thing is possible only through another force and on another level, by the intervention and interfusion precisely of the superconsciousness. And here comes the second point to note. For it is this superconsciousness towards which all the strife and struggle of the under-consciousness are turned and directed. The yearning and urge in the subconsciousness to move forward, to escape outside into the light does not refer merely to the march towards normal awareness and consciousness: it has a deeper direction and a higher aim—it seeks that of which it is an aberration and a deformation, the very origin and source, the height from which it fell.

This superconsciousness has a special mode of its quintessential energy which is omnipotent in action, immediate in effectivity. It is pure as the purest incandescent solar light and embodies the concentrated force of consciousness. It is the original creative vibration of the absolute or supreme Being. Sri Aurobindo calls this supreme form of superconsciousness-energy, the Supermind. There are of course other layers and strata of superconsciousness leading up to the supermind which are of various potentials and embody different degrees of spiritual power and consciousness.

We have spoken of the Inner Consciousness. But there is also, we must now point out, an Inmost Consciousness. As the Superconsciousness is a consciousness-energy in height, the Inmost Consciousness is a consciousness-energy in depth, the deepest depth, beyond or behind the Inner Consciousness. If we wish to put it geometrically, we can say, the vertical section of consciousness represents the line from the superconsciousness to the subconscious or vice versa; the horizontal section represents the normal waking state of consciousness; and there is a transverse section leading from the surface first to the Inner and finally to the Inmost. This inmost consciousness—the consciousness most profound and secreted in the cave of the heart, *guhāhitam gahvareṣṭham*,—is the consciousness of the soul, the Psychic Being, as Sri Aurobindo calls it: it is the immortal in the mortal. It is, as has often been described, the nucleus round which is crystallised and organised

the triple nature of man consisting of his mind and life and body, the centre of dynamic energy that secretly vivifies them, gradually purifies and transforms them into higher functions and embodiments of consciousness. As a matter of fact, it is this inmost consciousness that serves as the link, at least as the most powerful link, between the higher and lower forms of consciousness, between the Superconscient and the Subconscient or Inconscient. It takes up within itself all the elements of consciousness that the past in its evolutionary career from the very lowest and basic levels has acquired and elaborated, and by its inherent pressure and secret gestation delivers what was crude and base and unformed as the purest luminous noble substance of the perfectly organised superconscient reality. Indeed, that is the mystic alchemy which the philosophers experimented in the Middle Ages. In this context, the Inner Consciousness, we may note, serves as a medium through which the action of the Inmost (as well as that of the Uppermost) takes place.

We can picture the whole phenomenon in another way and say in the devotional language of the Mystics that the Inmost Consciousness is the Divine Child, the Superconscient is the Divine Father and the Inferior Consciousness is the Great Mother (*Magna Mater*): the Inner and the Outer Consciousness are the field of play and the instrument of action as well of this Divine Trinity.

Man, we thus see, is an infinitely composite being. We have referred to the four or five major chords in him, but each one has again innumerable gradations of vibration. Man is a bundle or dynamo of energy and this energy is nothing but the force of consciousness. To different modes or potentials of this energy different names are given. And what makes the thing still more complex is that all these elements exist simultaneously and act simultaneously, although in various degrees and stresses. They act upon each other, and severally and collectively impress upon the nature and character of the individual being and mould and direct his physical status and pragmatic life. A man can, however, take consciously a definite position and status, identify himself with a particular form and force of consciousness and build his being and life in the truth and rhythm of that consciousness. Naturally

the limits and the limitation of that consciousness mark also the limits and limitation of the disposition he can effect in his life. When it is said that the spiritual force is not effective on the physical plane in mundane affairs—Buddha, it is said, for example, has not been able to rid the earth of age, disease and death (although it was not Buddha's intention to do so, his purpose was to show a way of escape, of bypassing the ills of life, and in that he wholly succeeded)—it only means that the right mode or potential of spiritual energy has not been found; for that matter even the mightiest mundane forces are not sovereignly effective in mundane affairs, otherwise the Nazi-Force would have been ruling the world today.

Still it must be remembered that all these apparently diverse layers and degrees of being or consciousness or energy form essentially one indivisible unity and identity. What is called the highest and what is called the lowest are not in reality absolutely disparate and incommensurable entities: everywhere it is the highest that lies secreted and reigns supreme. The lowest is the highest itself seen from the reverse side, as it were: the norms and typical truths that obtain in the superconsciousness are also the very guiding formulas and principles in the secret heart of the Inconscience too, only they appear externally as deformations and caricatures of their true reality. But even here we can tap and release the full force of a superconscious energy. A particle of dead matter, we know today, is a mass of stilled energy, electrical and radiant in nature; even so an apparently inconscient entity is a packet of Superconsciousness in its highest potential of energy. The secret of releasing this atomic energy of the Spirit is found in the Science of Yoga.

Evolution of the Spiritual Consciousness

EVEN the Vedic Rishis used to refer to the ancients, more ancient than they themselves. "The ancients", they said, "worshipped Agni, we too the moderns in our turn worship the same godhead". Or again, "Thus spoke our forefathers"; or, "So have we heard from those who have gone before us" and so on.

Indeed, the tradition in the domain of spiritual discipline seems to have been always to realise once again what has already been realised by others, to rediscover what has already been discovered, to re-establish ancient truths. Others have gone before on the Path, we have only to follow. The teaching, the realisation is handed down uninterrupted through millenniums from Master to disciple. In other words, the idea is that the fundamental spiritual realisation remains the same always and everywhere: the name and the form only vary according to the age and the surroundings. The one reality is called variously, says the Veda. Who can say when was the first dawn! The present dawn has followed the track of the infinite series that has gone by and is the first of the infinite series that is to come. So sings Rishi Kanwa. For the core of spiritual realisation is to possess the consciousness, attain the status of the Spirit. This Spirit may be called God by the theist or Nihil by the Negativist or Brahman (the One) by the Positivist (spiritual). But the essential experience of a cosmic and transcendental reality does not differ very much. So it is declared that there is only one goal and aim, and there are, at the most, certain broad principles, clear pathways which one has to follow if one is to move in the right direction, advance smoothly and attain infallibly: but these have been well marked out, surveyed and charted and do not admit of

serious alterations and deviations. The spiritual aspiration is a very definite and unitary movement and its fulfilment is also a definite and invariable status of the consciousness. The spiritual is a typical domain, one may say, there is no room here for sudden unforeseen variation or growth or evolution.

Is it so in fact? For, if one admits and accepts the evolutionary character of human nature and consciousness, the outlook becomes somewhat different. According to this view, human civilisation is seen as moving through progressive stages: man at the outset was centrally lodged in and occupied with his body consciousness, he was an *annamaya puruṣa*; then he raised himself and centred in the vital consciousness and so became fundamentally a *prāṇamaya puruṣa*; next he climbed into the mental consciousness and became a *manomaya puruṣa*; from that level again he has been attempting to go further beyond. On each plane the normal life is planned according to the central character, the law—dharma—of that plane. One can have the religious or spiritual experience on each of these planes, representing various degrees of growth and evolution according to the plane to which it is attached. It is therefore that the Tantra refers to three gradations of spiritual seekers and accordingly three types or lines of spiritual discipline: the animal (*paśu bhāva*), the heroic (*vīra bhāva*) and the godly or divine (*deva bhāva*). The classification is not merely typical but also hierarchical and evolutionary in character.

The Divine or the spiritual consciousness, instead of being a simple unitary entity, is a vast, complex, stratified reality. "There are many chambers in my Father's mansion", says the Bible: many chambers on many stories, one may add. Also there are different levels or approaches that serve different seekers each with his own starting-point, his *point de repaire*. When one speaks of union with the Divine or of entering into the spiritual consciousness, one does not refer to the same identical truth or reality as any other. There is a physical Divine, a vital Divine, a mental Divine; and beyond the mind—from where one may consider that the region of true spirit begins—there are other innumerable modes, aspects, manifestations of the Divine.

As we say, there are not only aspects of the Divine, but

there are also levels in him. The spiritual consciousness rises tier upon tier and each spur has its own view and outlook, rhythm and character. Now, as long as man was chiefly preoccupied with his physico-vital or mentalised physico-vital activities, as long as the burden of his body and life and even mind lay heavy on him and their gravitational pull was normally very strong, almost irresistible, the spiritual impulse in him acted generally and fundamentally as a movement of escape from them into *some* thing beyond. It was a negative movement on the whole and it was enough to dissociate, reject, sublimate the lower status and somehow rise into something which is not that (*neti*): the question was not important at that stage of the human consciousness about a scientific scrutiny of the Beyond, its precise constitution and composition.

But once there is the possibility gained of a more normalised, familiar and wider reconnaissance of the Beyond, when the human being has been mentalised to a degree and in a manner that makes it inevitable for him to overpass to a higher status and live there habitually, then it becomes an urgent matter of concern to know and find out where one goes exactly, on which level and in what domain, once one is beyond. The question, it is true, engaged the attention of the ancients too; but it was more or less an interesting inquiry, a good part speculative and theoretical; it had not the reality and insistence of the need of the hour. We have today chalked out an almost exhaustive science of the inferior consciousness, of the lower hemisphere—of course, so far as it is possible for such a science to be exhaustive moving in the light of the partial and inferior consciousness. In the same way we need at the present hour a complete and precise science of the Divine Consciousness. As there is a logic of the finite, there is also a logic of the infinite, not merely its magic, and that too has to be discovered and laid out.

Thus, the highest and most comprehensive description of the Divine is perhaps the formula Sat-chit-ananda. But even so, it is a very general and, after all, an inadequate description. It has to be filled in and supplemented by other categories as well, if one may say so. For Sat-chit-ananda presents to us the Sat Brahman. There is also the Asat Brahman. And again

we must accept a reality which is neither Sat nor Asat—*nāsadāsinno sadāsīt*, says the Veda. And as for the filling up of the details in an otherwise almost blank and featureless infinity, Sri Aurobindo's charting of that vast unknown—with the categories of the Supermind and its various levels, of the Overmind and its levels too, all forming the Divine Status and Consciousness—is a new, almost a revolutionary revelation, just the required science which the present world needs and demands and for which it has been prepared through all the cycles of evolution.

This means to say that with the knowledge that is given us today, one can determine more or less definitely the altitudes to which the various spiritual realisations of the past rose and one can see also the degrees or graded stages of the evolution of the spiritual consciousness. A broad landmark can be noted here which concerns us at the present moment. The spiritual consciousness has been rising to higher and higher peaks and possessing them one after another. At the present moment we are at a crisis, at a crucial crossing. The spiritual consciousness attained till now and securely held in human possession (in man's inner nature) is confined to the highest level of the mind with some infiltration from the Overmind and through that, as a springing board, a leap into an indefinite, almost a blank Beyond. Now the time is come and the conditions are ready for the spiritual consciousness in humanity to arrive at the status above the Overmind to the Supermind, and make that a living reality and build in and through that its normal consciousness.

A progressive revelation of higher and higher and more integral states of the spiritual consciousness in and through the realisations of mystics and sages and seers—divine men—of all ages, such is the process of evolution that marks the life of man upon earth. This spiritual evolution, however, may not be obviously visible in the external life and character of man: it has been a phenomenon more in his inner being and consciousness, an occult phenomenon. Hence there has intervened a veil, wall of separation between the two. The veil has not been rent precisely because the very highest spiritual potential has not been reached and brought into play. The call of the present age is just to do away with this

veil, make of human nature a unified, a streamlined entity, a complete incarnation of the spiritual consciousness in the fullness of its own nature at its source and origin.

The Freedom and the Force of the Spirit

THE first thing that has to be learnt in life is that circumstances are not all in all: however powerful and overwhelming they may appear to be at a given moment, man can always react against them. If there is not an immediate success externally as desired, the will thus exerted does not go in vain. First of all, it declares and asserts the independence and autonomy of the inner man: something within is found and established which is not touched by the environment, which lives by its own authentic truth and reality and is ever contented and happy. It is in reference to such a poise of consciousness that the great poet says:

A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, . . .¹

The soldier of an ideal, the martyr, bears testimony to the reality of this mental condition: the Yogi is he who is supremely indifferent to outside contacts (*mātrāsparsah*), fixed as he is in inner union with the Divine. Secondly, the freedom of the will not only liberates the inner person, but exerts a pressure on the outside also, upon the field and circumstances, obliging them to change or move in the direction and according to the demand of the will. Consciousness has this power: only all depends on the nature of the consciousness and the will it embodies. For consciousness-will has varying degrees and levels of its potential. A will belonging to the purely mental consciousness can have only a very limited result and may not even show itself at all in any external modification. For

¹ Milton: *Paradise Lost*, Bk. 1. 253

it is only one among a million contending forces and its effect will depend upon the allies it can count on its side. Similar is the case with a vital will or a physico-vital will: these are more effective apparently but always in a narrow field; the narrower the field, the greater the possibility of the effectiveness. Moreover, a mental will affects chiefly the mental field, a vital will is directly operative in the vital world, even as a physical force is effective on physical things: each is largely confined to its own domain, the effect on other domains is for the most part indirect and remote.

But the truly effective will, that can produce an all-round change, comes from a still higher or deeper source. Indeed, the will that never fails, that turns even the external circumstances, adverse and obstructive though they appear to be, to serve it, is the will of the soul, the spiritual being in us. And man is man, not a mere animal, because he has been called upon to seek and find his soul, to get at his inner and inmost being and from there command his external nature and outside circumstances too. The orthodox name for this endeavour is spiritual discipline or Yoga.

On lower levels, a conscious will made up of a compound energy of the mental and vital and physical will, when in sufficient proportions, has considerable effective force: great men of action have this distinction. Even then, however, theirs is not that type which is absolute or never-failing, nor that especial category which will bring about a collective change, a fundamental change, intensive as well as extensive, needed at this evolutionary crisis of earth and humanity.

The ordinary average man is part and parcel of Nature's movement and his life is almost wholly moulded by circumstances: he has not developed an independent inner being that can react against the universal Nature's current, that is to say, the Nature as it is, as it is actually and dynamically expressed. He is the creature, described graphically in the Gita, as being moved helplessly on the circling wheel of Ignorance.¹ But even among the average men there are many who are called men of will, they are not entirely submerged in Nature's current, but endeavour to have their own way even against that current. Their psycho-vital, aided often by their physical

¹ *Bhṛāmāyan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*,—XVIII. 61

consciousness, has an independent formation, being a strong centre of self-driven force, and can impress upon the outer Nature and circumstances its own pattern and disposition. Naturally, all depends upon the degree and character of that consciousness.

But the true secret of the power to control and guide Nature's dispensation lies along a different line, not along the line of the normal activity of the mental and vital and physical consciousness. Body and life and mind belong after all, at least are closely affiliated, to one's environmental consciousness; they are indeed part of the circumstances in which one is born and lives and moves. It is when one bypasses them or passes through them beyond into one's soul, into one's true being and divine personality that one at last crosses mortality and attains immortality—*mṛtyum tīrtvā . . . amṛtam aśnute*.¹

¹ *Isha Upanishad*, 14

To Be or Not To Be

A MORAL problem, *un cas de conscience* (a case of conscience), as they say in French. To defend yourself against your attacker and kill him who comes to kill you or stand disarmed and let yourself be killed—which is better, which has the greater moral value? To fight your enemy is normal, is human. To preserve yourself, that is to say, your body, is the very first injunction of Nature. That is Nature's primary and fundamental demand. And to preserve one's life one has to take others' life. That is also Nature. But then, it is said, man is meant to rise above Nature, live (even if it means to die) according to a higher law—not the biological law, the law of tooth and claw. The higher law is for the preservation of life indeed, but others' life, not one's own, if it comes to that; it is not self-centred, but wholly other-regarding, it is for harmony, for peace and amity, not violence and battle. If one demurs and points out that it requires two to be friends and at peace, the answer is that one side must begin, and the merit goes to him who begins. One need not worry about the other side, which may be left to follow its own law of life, which, however, can be gained over only in this way and not by compulsion or coercion or violence. *Na hi vaireṇa vairaṇi sāmīyantiha kadācana*. Never by enmity is enmity appeased, says the Dhammapada.¹

This is a way of cutting the Gordian knot. But the problem is not so simple as the moralist would have it. Resist not evil: if it is made an absolute rule, would not the whole world be filled with evil? Evil grows much faster than good. By not resisting evil one risks to perpetuate the very thing that one fears; it deprives the good of its chance to approach or get a

¹ Canto I. 5

foothold. That is why the Divine Teacher declares in the Gita that God comes down upon earth, assuming a human body,¹ to protect the good and slay the wicked,² slay not metaphorically but actually and materially, as he did on the field of the Kurus.

It is a complex problem and the solution too is complex. The Gita—and Hinduism generally—does not posit a universal *dharma*, but a hierarchy of dharmas. Men have different natures; so their duties, their functions and activities, their paths of growth and development must naturally be different. A rigid rule does not fit in with the facts of life, and the more absolute it is, the less efficacy it possesses as a living reality. Therefore in the Indian social scheme, there is one *dharma* for the Brahmin and another for the Kshatriya, a third for the Vaishya and a fourth for the Shudra.

The Brahmin is he who represents in his nature and character the principle and movement of knowledge, of comprehension and inclusion, of peace and harmony—all the qualities that are termed *sāttwic*. A Brahmin does not fight, the very build of his consciousness prevents him from wounding and hurting; he has no enemy; even if he is attacked or killed, he does not raise his arm to protect himself (although Ramakrishna would prescribe even for him a modified or mollified mode of resisting the evil, hissing at least if not biting). The Biblical injunction, we know, is to present the other cheek too to the smiter. This is for those who follow the Brahminical discipline. But a Kshatriya, who in his nature and consciousness is a warrior, has another *dharma*; he is the armed guard of knowledge and truth, he is strength and force. He has to resist the evil in the name of the Lord, he has to raise his arm to strike. He is the instrument of Rudra and Mahakali. Does not the mighty goddess declare—"I draw the bow for Rudra, I hurl the arrow to slay the hater of the truth"?³ If the Kshatriya does not follow his own *dharma*, but seeks to imitate the Brahmin, he brings about a confusion liable to disintegrate the society, he is then un-Aryan, inglorious, unworthy of heaven, deserving all the epithets which Sri

¹ *Mānuṣīm tanu āśritam*, IX. 11

² *Paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*, IV. 8

³ *Ahaṁ rudrāya dhanurākanomi brahmadisvā sarobē kantabā u* —*Rig Veda*, IX. 126

Krishna heaped upon the dejected, depressed and confused Arjuna. So long as the world is held by brute force, so long as there is the sway of evil power over the material earth and the physical body, there will be the need to resist it physically: if I do not do it, other instruments will be found. I may say like Arjuna, overwhelmed with pity and grief, "I shall not fight", but God and the cosmic deities may refuse my refusal and compel me to do what in my ignorance and wrong-headedness I would not like to do.

Here lies the secret and the solution of the problem. It is, indeed, the solution given for all ages by the Gita. There will always be a problem, a difficult decision to make—a division in the consciousness—so long as one is in the realm of dualities, in one's mental being and consciousness, ruled by relativities and contingencies. There one cannot but have a divided loyalty. A part of you, for example, is loyal to your family, another to your country, a third to yourself or to some ideal which you have set up. And naturally man feels confused in the midst of their conflicting claims and is at a loss to choose. Therefore, the Gita says, the highest law, the supreme code of conduct, is the Divine Will. And the only work and labour for man is to discover and identify oneself with this Divine Will. "Abandon all other standards of conduct, take refuge in Me alone."¹ That is the supreme secret of human life—as well as of the Life Divine.

To know the Divine Will and to be one with it is not easy, to be sure. But that is the only radical solution. That has got to be done, if one is to come out of the chaos he is in.

Once in this status of the divine consciousness, one passes beyond the three Gunas. That is to say, one bids good-bye to one's (the human sense of) freedom and option or choice. One can say no longer, I cannot do it, for it seems immoral, I have to do that, because that seems good. One goes beyond good and bad and awaits the divine command. One does what one is ordered to do from above, what is needed to fulfil the Cosmic Purpose. You do not act then, it is the Divine who acts in you.

It may be asked if even then there are not some types of activity and impulsion that are intrinsically evil, undivine—

¹ *The Gita*, XVIII. 66

they can under no circumstances be godly or God's instruments, they have to be rejected, cast aside in the very beginning, also in the middle and naturally in the end. But it must be remembered that the human mind cannot be the judge of what is divine or undivine, there are things the Divine may sanction which the mental being fights shy of. It must leave it to the Divine to choose His instrument and His mode of activity—it is sufficient if the mental being knows by whom it is impelled and where it falls as an arrow shot to its mark: *keneṣitam patati preṣitam*.¹

Yes, there is one thing intrinsically evil and undivine and that has to be rejected and cast aside ruthlessly—that is nothing else than the egoistic consciousness. It is this that has passions and prejudices, likes and dislikes, ideas and ideals, formations of its own, other deities installed in place of the Divine Truth and Reality. The ego goes, indeed, and with it also those rhythms and stresses, lines and shades germane to it that bar the free flow of the Supreme Breath. But the instrument remains and the arms and the weapons—they are cleansed and sanctified: instead of the Asura wielding them, it is now the gods, the Divine Himself who possess and use them.

¹ *Kena Upanishad*, I. 1

Readings in "Savitri"

1

A guardian of the unconsolated abyss
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain
Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes
That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.
Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
The daily oblation of her unwept tears.¹

THE deepest and the most fundamental mystery of the human consciousness (and in fact of the earth consciousness) is not that there is an unregenerate aboriginal being there as its bed-rock, a being made of the very stuff of ignorance and inconstancy and inertia that is Matter: it is this that the submerged being is not merely dead matter, but a concentrated, a solidified flame, as it were, a suppressed aspiration that burns inwardly, all the more violent because it is not articulate and in the open. The aboriginal is that which harbours in its womb the original being. That is the Inconscient Godhead, the Divinity in pain—*Mater Dolorosa*—the Divine Being who lost himself totally when transmuted into Matter and yet is harassed always by the oestrus of a secret flame driving it to know itself, to find itself, to be itself again. It is Rudra, the Energy coiled up in Matter and forging ahead towards a progressive evolution in light and consciousness. That is what Savitri, the universal Divine Grace become material and human, finds at the core of her being, the field

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *Savitri—A Legend and a Symbol*. Book 1, Canto 1

and centre of concentrated struggle, a millennial aspiration petrified, a grief of ages congealed, a divinity lone and benumbed in a trance. This divinity has to awake and labour. The god has to be cruel to himself, for his divinity demands that he must surpass himself, he cannot abdicate, let Nature go her own way, the inferior path of ease and escape. The godhead must exercise its full authority, exert all its pressure upon itself—*tapas taptvā*—and by this heat of incubation release the energy that leads towards the light and the high fulfilment. In the meanwhile, the task is not easy. The divine sweetness and solicitude lights upon this hardened divinity: but the inertia of the Inconscient, the 'Pani', hides still the light within its rocky cave and would not deliver it. The Divine Grace, mellow with all the tears of love and sympathy and tenderness she has gathered for the labouring godhead, has pity for the hard lot of a humanity stone-bound to the material life, yet yearning and surging towards freedom. The godhead is not consoled or appeased until that freedom is achieved and light and immortality released. The Grace is working slowly, laboriously perhaps but surely to that end: the stone will wear down and melt one day. Is that fateful day come?

That is the meaning of human life, the significance of even the very ordinary human life. It is the field of a "dire debate", "a fierce question", a constant struggle between the two opposing or rather polar forces, the will or aspiration "to be" and the will of inertia "not to be"—the friction, to use a Vedic image, of the two batons of the holy sacrificial wood, *arāṇi* out of which the flame is to leap forth. The pain and suffering men are subject to in this unhappy vale of tears—physical illness and incapacity, vital frustration or mental confusion—are symbols and expressions of a deeper fundamental Pain. That pain is the pain of labour, the travail for the birth and incarnation of a godhead asleep or dead. Indeed, the sufferings and ills of life are themselves powerful instruments. They inevitably lead to the Bliss, they are the fuel that kindles, quickens and increases the Fire of Ecstasy that is to blaze up on the day of victory in the full and integral spiritual consciousness. The round of ordinary life is not vain or meaningless: its petty innocent-looking moments and events are the

steps of the marching Divinity. Even the commonest life is the holy sacrificial rite progressing, through the oblations of our experiences, bitter or sweet, towards the revelation and establishment of the immortal godhead in man.

2

Savitri, the Divine Grace in human form, is upon earth. The Divine Consciousness has abandoned its own supreme transcendental status to enter into the human consciousness and partake of the earthly life: it has taken up a mortal frame, to live and dwell here below. Only thus she can transform the lower animal nature into the divine nature, raise man to godhead, make of earth heaven itself:

A prodigal of her rich divinity,
Her self and all she was she had lent to men,
Hoping her greater being to implant
That heaven might native grow on mortal soil.¹

But the task is not easy. The flesh is weak: it is incapable of holding or receiving the breath of immortality. Not only so, it has a positive aversion, a bad will: it is refractory, anti-pathetic to the touch of the spirit. Matter is dull and dumb, dark and obdurate: mortality loves and clings jealously and exclusively to its mortal home. The earthly being does not know, cannot appreciate the gift, the boon that is brought to him, to his very door: he has only to receive and accept in order to be saved out of all ignorance and grief, impotence and death. The Divine Mother has forgotten herself, has made herself as small and as close and native to earth as any earthly creature, like any one of us, taken upon herself all limitations and indignities, the entire burden of an earthly life, graced with her presence this mortal atmosphere. But,

Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change;
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance

¹ Op. cit. Book 1, Canto 1

Of that assault of ether and of fire;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings;...¹

As, however, "mortality bears ill the eternal's touch", the eternal too is intolerant of the mortal nature—only it is intolerant not in the ignorant blind squeamish weak human way, but in a divine way, for it is armed with weapons of light and knowledge, it assaults with its luminous force, the energy of ether and fire, the higher and nobler elements as against the dense dark dumb earth, the lowest element that clothes the human consciousness. Indeed, mortality is enamoured of the tangled beam of joy and sorrow, of laughter and tears, of light and shadow and cannot contemplate the unalloyed sheer delight in Eternity. It is out of breath in the serene rarefied air of immortality; it pines for the *terra firma*, the mud and slime. The human consciousness has been fleeing the Hound of Heaven down the corridors of Time, and yet it will be caught in the end and wholly transmuted in the divine embrace into the substance of the Divine Himself. All the unwillingness and protestation and revolt are meant to forge and hammer the final union into something perfect, faultless, absolute.

¹ Op. cit. Book 1, Canto 1

PART FIVE

At the Origin of Ignorance

THE Divine Consciousness, basically and essentially one and unique, has inherent in it four cardinal attributes—principles of its modulation, modes of its vibration—developing into or appearing as four aspects and personalities. They are Light, Force, Delight and Knowledge. Originally and in the supreme status the four movements are one and indivisible and form one indissoluble identity with the Divine's pure essence and absolute unity. The differentiation or variability there in the Immutable is a play immanent in the integral self-nature of the Supreme. The one and the many form on that level a single entity, an undivided whole: the unity running in and through and holding the multiplicity and the multiplicity being the playfulness of the unity. Multiplicity, however, implies freedom of movement in the Unique. In other words, the very character of variability is the absolute freedom of the variables; the play consists precisely in the free choice and self-determination of the partners, the differentiated units. For a formation in the Divine Consciousness, an individualised formulation of its being must necessarily have the Divine's own freedom. Now, the result of this freedom is somewhat unexpected, to put it in the human way, that is to say, it was not explicit at that point, in that field of consciousness. For the freedom, in the normal course of its play, reached a degree or arrived at a mode which brought about a shift and an impulsion meaning a rift and a clear separation: the momentum of the free movement carried the individual formation beyond the range of its sense of unity and identity with all and the One. More and more it isolated itself, limiting itself to its own orbit and to its own fund of energy. This isolation, it must be noted, occurs at the origin without any

sense of perversity or revolt or disobedience on the part of the free entity, as the legend formulated by the human mind imaged it. The movement of freedom and individual formation in its urge crosses, as it were, a borderline, passes from the safe zone within the Divine's own status into a different zone, creates it, as a matter of fact, by that overzealous and self-concentrated free movement. But, as I have said, there is no premeditation or *arrière pensée* or "bad will" or spirit of contradiction there at the origin of the deviation. It is no original sin: it is a spontaneous, almost a logical consequence, an inevitable expression of the freedom that particulars enjoy as part and parcel of the Divine Universal.

And yet the result is strange and revolutionary. The game once begun develops its own scheme and pattern and modality. For that crucial step in the movement of freedom, that definite moving away, the assertion of complete independence and isolation immediately brought about a reversal of realities, a complete negation of the original attributes. Thus Light became obscurity or Inconscience, Life became death, Delight became pain and suffering, Power became incapacity, Knowledge became Ignorance, and Truth became falsehood. In other words, Spirit became forthright Matter.

What seemed, however, to be nothing more than an accident is pregnant nevertheless with a profound meaning and significance. Indeed God has not created the world in jest. Spirit became Matter, that is to say, an apparent negation of the Spirit, to demonstrate that the negation is a way of affirmation, a more integral way of affirmation of the Spirit. Matter has been brought out to express another poise of the spirit, spirit concretised and embodied.

Physician, Heal Thyself

It is not that humanity does not know or feel the need of a radical change in itself. Everywhere man recognises that if the problems and difficulties that face him have to be solved satisfactorily, there must be a thorough overhauling of his outlook and nature; no mere tinkering with the superficial signs and symptoms of an organic disease by means of palliatives and expedencies and nostrums, but a major operation. Indeed, if he wishes to be cured, he must transcend his present nature and be something else.

And yet he does not change. He has not the sincere will to change. At least he takes the wrong way about it. And the reason is that he does not whole-heartedly adopt the course which he knows to be the only right thing. He is divided in his being: one part knows indeed, but another, the larger, the dynamic part does not profit by that knowledge, ignores it and pursues a contrary path, the accustomed groove of ignorance and *laissez-faire*.

He consoles and comforts himself, lays the flattering unction to his soul by taking to a less exacting ideal, a substitute without tears, as it were. Therefore he looks outside, seeks to reform society, changing its laws and constitution, and wants to believe that in that way society can be remodelled and mankind transformed.

It should have been proved beyond doubt by now that the fact is not so. The only way to cure the world outside is to cure oneself first inside. The ancient proverb still holds good: the macrocosm is only an enlargement of the microcosm, the microcosm is the macrocosm in miniature. The universe is a transcript, a projection on a large scale of the individual nature within. What is there is here and what is not here is not found

there. When we see some wrong in the world, something that has got to be set right, instead of rushing out and trying to tackle it in the external field, if one were to hold oneself back and look within, one would surely find, perhaps to his surprise and enlightenment, a very similar movement, often an exact replica in one's own consciousness and character of what one finds in the larger anonymous movements of nature and society. Now it may be admitted that one has no control or almost none over one's nature; the outside world is beyond our reach and we cannot order or mould it as we like. But the smaller world which is ourselves is not too far or too great for us; our own individual nature and character is ours and we have been given sufficient freedom and power to reform, renew and remake it. That is the secret, although it seems to be a very simple truth, almost a truism.

And if we cannot correct and mould as we wish the little world within which is our own, how can we expect to correct or change the vaster outer world? To leave oneself to be as one is and to try to make others change is evidently an absurd and self-contradictory proposition. On the other hand, if the first thing that one does is to correct oneself, then one will find, much to one's surprise and satisfaction, that there is very little to correct in the world, everything has been already corrected automatically.

Each man is given his little domain within him and he is master of that domain. Nobody is given more (or less even) than what he can successfully manage: the charge is accurately measured according to capacity. One can be indeed a *roi fainéant*, if one chooses to be so; but that is not man's inevitable destiny; he can truly be the ruling king and exercise, to the full, his authority. It is a simple truth that man has a will and can wield it. This will he can consciously develop, increase and enlarge, make it an extremely powerful, if not invincible, instrument for action.

Will is a twofold power: it is energy and it is light. True will, will in essential purity, that is to say, when one is perfectly sincere and determined to follow up one's sincerity, impels rightly and impels infallibly. The consciousness is there of the right thing to do and the energy is also there inherent in that consciousness to work it out inevitably. There is a will be-

longing to a lower level, to the mind which is only a variant of wish, and in reference to that only it is said that even if the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. This will is a light, but without the fire that vivifies: and that is because there is a division in the consciousness, "one can love and yet one can betray," in the words of a famous novelist.

But as we have already said, man is not condemned to this malady of schizophrenia: he is not by nature a Manichean creature. He is whole and entire in his inner reality and true consciousness and he can assert his integrality, he has the freedom and the power to do so—he has to and will do so, since it is not merely a possibility but an inevitability that is to come about in the course of his growth and evolution.

And when he has done so, when he has salvaged himself, by that he will have salvaged the world too around him. The measure of the success within will be the measure of the success without.

The Body Natural

WITH regard to the food that man takes, there are two factors that determine or prescribe it. First of all, the real need of the body, that is to say, what the body actually requires for its maintenance, the elements to meet the chemical changes occurring there, something quite material and very definite, viz, the kind of food and the quantity. But usually this real need of the body is obscured and submerged under the demands of another kind of agency, almost altogether foreign to it, (1) vital desire and (2) mental notions. Indeed, the menu of our table, at least 90% of it, is arranged so as to satisfy the demands of the second category, the consideration that should come first comes last in fact. The body is at present a slave of the mind and the vital; it is hardly given the freedom of choosing its own requirements in the right quantity and quality. That is why the body is seen to suffer everywhere and is normally sick for the greater part of its earthly existence. It has been compelled to occupy an anomalous position in the human organism between these two tyrants. The vital goes by its greed, its attraction and repulsion, its impulse to excess (sometimes to its opposite of deprivation); what it has been accustomed to, what it has taken a fancy for, to that it clings, and if the body has not what it prescribes, it throws the suggestion into the body that it will fall ill. The physical mind has its own notions and schemes, pet ideas and plans (perhaps from what has been read in books or heard from persons) in respect of the body's needs; it thinks that if a certain prescription is not followed, the body will suffer. The mind and the vital are thus close friends and accomplices in regimenting the body. They impose their own demands and prejudices upon the body which helplessly gets entangled

in them and loses its native instinct. The body left to itself is marvellously self-conscious; it knows spontaneously and unfailingly what is good for its health and strength. The animals usually, especially those of the forest, preserve still the unspoilt body instinct; for they have no mind to tyrannise over the body nor is their vital of a kind to go against the normal demands of the body. The body, segregated from the mind and the vital, can very easily choose the right kind of food and the right quantity and even vary them according to the varying conditions of the body. Common sense is an inherent attribute of the body consciousness; it never errs on the side of excess and immoderation or perversity. The vital is dramatic, the mind is imaginative, but the body is sanity itself. And that is not a sign of its inconscience and inertia. The dull and dumb immobility of which it is sometimes accused is after all perhaps a mode of its self-defence against the wild vagaries of the mind and the vital to which it is so often called upon to lend its support. Indeed, it may very well be that the accusation against the flesh that it is weak is only an opinion or suggestion imposed on the body by the mental-vital who throw the whole blame upon the body just to escape from the blame due to themselves. The vital is impatient and clamorous, and if it is all push and drive—towards physical execution and fulfilment—it is normally clouded and troubled and obscured and doubly twisted when counselled and supported by a mind, narrow and superficial, not seeing beyond its nose, bound within a frame of incorrect and borrowed notions.

The body, precisely because of its negative nature—its dumb inertia, as it is called—precisely because it has no axe of its own to grind, that is to say, as it has no fancies and impulsions, plans and schemes upon which it can pride itself, precisely because of this childlike innocence, it has a wonderful plasticity and a calm stability, when it is not troubled by the mind or vital. Indeed, the divine qualities that are secreted in the body, which the body seeks to conserve and express are a stable harmony, a balance and equilibrium, capable of supporting the whole weight of all the levels of consciousness from the highest peak to the lowest abysses even as physically it bears the weight of the entire depth of the atmosphere so lightly as it were, without feeling the burden in the least.

The Measure of Time

WHEN it is said that the Realisation is decreed, is it meant also that the time for it has been fixed? If so, all individual effort and freedom of action seem to go out of the picture, being irrelevant—neither hastening nor retarding the process. The fact is somewhat different, not so simple and trenchant.

There is very little sense in the common notion that everything is predetermined as to the time when it will happen, that the universal scheme has been all unalterably arranged and mapped out from beforehand, that nothing can change it, all goes according to plan. This is only a human conception, a construction of the mind, a wrong translation in the brain of some fact which is otherwise and elsewhere. The mind divides where there is no division, puts things against each other where there is perfect compatibility and harmony. Determinism and Indeterminism, Free-Will and Mechanism are contradictions set up by the mind and have no real objective existence. From a certain view-point, on a certain level of consciousness things appear to move in a rigid frame of mechanistic determinism; from another view-point, on another level, things seem to possess absolute freedom.

Looked at from the higher source of things, the time-factor itself appears as an illusion. What is true is a certain set of conditions in which forces work themselves out. And in this pattern of conditions, time (along with space) does not give the absolute and fixed frame of reference, as is usually taken for granted, but is a varying background, even if it is not a side-issue or a by-product. The conscious force at work in the world aims at a change in the conditions; it is a work primarily of rearrangement and order. The state of Nature, of actuality—of ignorance and inertia—is one of chaos. What

the Divine Will behind, the Consciousness standing over, does is to develop a cosmos out of that chaos. Things are placed wrongly, at random, pell-mell: they have to be assorted, arranged, docketed, each item in its own place. We know, for example, of the material particle in which the atoms are huddled together, each pointing to a different direction, but when they are arranged in such a way that one half points in one way and the other half the contrary way, we have what is called a magnetised body.

It is when things are arranged in this manner, the right thing in the right place, that divine perfection, the Realisation in the material, is attained. And for this consummation to come about, the process that is followed is a greater and greater infiltration of higher and higher forces into the field of disorder, of our normal life and consciousness. The time taken simply indicates that the process is being worked out; it is an expression of the rhythm of procedure. But to the Divine, the Supreme Consciousness that works, time itself has no separate meaning or intrinsic value; for it a thousand or a million years do not mean more than what is one moment for us. Indeed, the slowness of time simply marks the steps of events in the lower ranges of creation: as we rise higher and higher, forces from there come down into the lower field, and the tempo of events quickens; finally, when the highest peak is attained and its forces descend and intervene in the ordering of the lowest levels, then the change, the arrangement that is being worked out, is accomplished immediately and without delay: the time lag is abolished altogether. Time may be compared to a kind of elastic bond connecting the highest and the lowest and running through the intermediate zones. It contracts as one moves upward and is telescoped, as it were, at the top.

Man the Prototype

THE earth has been created for a special purpose; it has a divine rôle to fulfil. And so there is only one earth and not many, in spite of what the scientists may say. The earth is not a mass of dead matter, not merely the dwelling-place of the growths that have occurred upon it, of plants and animals and men. She is the home and she is the mother of them all. She has a consciousness and a personality, the outer form that we see is only her body.

Indeed, all the luminaries of heaven have each its conscious personality, the planets, the moon and above all the great sun. It is not a fancy or idle imagination that made the astrologers ascribe definite influences to these heavenly bodies. In Hindu astrology, for example, they are considered as real persons, each with a definite form and character, a *dhyāna rūpa*. The so-called Nature-gods in the Vedas or in ancient mythology generally are in the same way not creations of mere poetic imagination: they are realities, more real in a sense than the real objects that represent and incarnate them.

Not only so. Our limited mind and senses are accustomed to view and recognise individuals alone as persons. But there are group personalities too. Thus each species has a generic personality, a consciousness and an ideal or intrinsic form also: the individuals on the physical plane are its various incarnations, projections and formations. Old Plato was not so naïve, as we of today are apt to believe, when he spoke of the real reality of general ideas. The attributes, qualities and functions of the generic personality are the source and pattern of what the individuals that form the group actually are. The group person is the king, he is also the body of the Dharma ruling the domain. Any change in the law of being of the group person is necessarily translated in a similar change in

the nature and activity of the individuals of the species. What evolutionists describe as sudden variation or mutation and whose cause or genesis they are at a loss to trace, is precisely due to an occult change in the consciousness and will of the group soul.

Man too as a species has a generic personality, his prototype. Only, in opposition to the scientific view, that is an earlier phenomenon belonging to the very origin of things. Man in his essential form and reality is found at the source and beginning of creation. When the unmanifest Transcendent steps forward to manifest, when there is the first expression of typal variations in the infinite as the basis of physical creation, then and there appears Man in his essential and eternal divine form. He is there almost as a sentinel, guarding the passage from the formless to form. Indeed, he is the first original form of the formless. A certain poet says that man is the archetype of all living forms. A bird is a flying man, a fish a swimming man, a worm a crawling man, even a plant is but a rooted man. His form belongs to a region beyond even the first principles of creation. The first principles that bring out and shape and uphold the manifested universe are the trinity: Life, Light and Delight—in other terms, Sachchidananda. The whole complex of the manifest universe is resolvable into that unity of triple status. But behind even this supernal, further on towards the final disappearance into the absolute Unmanifest—summing up, as it were, in him the whole manifestation—stands this original primordial form, this first person, this archetypal Man.

The essential appearance of Man is, as we have said, the prototype of the actual man. That is to say, the actual man is a projection, even though a somewhat disfigured projection, of the original form; yet there is an essential similarity of pattern, a commensurability between the two. The winged angels, the cherubs and seraphs are reputed to be ideal figures of beauty, but they are nothing akin to the Prototype, they belong to a different line of emanation, other than that of the human being. We may have some idea of what it is like by taking recourse to the distinction that Greek philosophers used to make between the formal and the material cause of things. The prototype is the formal reality hidden and imbed-

ded in the material reality of an object. The essential form is made of the original configuration of primary vibrations that later on consolidate and become a compact mass, arriving finally at its end physico-chemical composition. A subtle yet perfect harmony of vibrations forming a living whole is what the prototype essentially is. An artist perhaps is in a better position to understand what we have been labouring to describe. The artist's eye is not confined to the gross physical form of an object, even the most realistic artist does not hold up the mirror to Nature in that sense: he goes behind and sees the inner contour, the subtle figuration that underlies the external volume and mass. It is that that is beautiful and harmonious and significant, and it is that which the artist endeavours to bring out and fix in a system or body of lines and colours. That inner form is not the outer visible form and still it is that form fundamentally, essentially. It is that and it is not that. We may add another analogy to illustrate the point. Pythagoras, for example, spoke of numbers being realities, the real realities of all sensible objects. He was evidently referring to the basic truth in each individual and this truth appeared to him as a number, the substance and relation that remain of an object when everything concrete and superficial is extracted—or abstracted—out of it. A number to him is a quality, a vibration, a quantum of wave-particles, in the modern scientific terminology, a norm. The human prototype can be conceived as something of the category of the Pythagorean number.

The conception of the Purusha at the origin of things, as the very source of things, so familiar to the Indian tradition, gives this high primacy to the human figure. We know also of the cosmic godhead cast in man's mould—although with multiple heads and feet—visioned and hymned by sages and seers. The gods themselves seem to possess a human frame. The Upanishads say that once upon a time the gods looked about for a proper body to dwell in, they were disappointed with all others; it is only when the human form was presented that they exclaimed, "This is indeed a perfect form, a perfect form indeed." All that indicates the feeling and perception that there is something eternal and transcendent in the human body-frame.

The Rôle of Evil

THE advent or the presence of evil upon earth has introduced certain factors in human life that have enriched it, increased even its value. Certain experiences would not have been there, intimate and revelatory experiences, but for this Dark Shadow. One can, of course, conceive a line of growth and development in which it is all light and delight, everything is good and for the good. But then a whole domain of experience and realisation would have been missed. There are certain experiences that one would not like not to have had at all, even though that may mean paying and paying heavily.

Evil is evil, no doubt; it is not divine and it is not an illusion. It is a real blot on the fair face of creation. Its existence cannot be justified in the sense that it is the right thing and has to be welcomed and maintained, since it forms part of the universal symphony. Not even in the sense that it is a test and a trial set by the Divine for the righteous to prove their merit. It has not been put there with a set purpose, but that once given, it has been the occasion of a miracle, it offered the opportunity for the manifestation of something unique, great and grandiose, marvellous and beautiful. The presence of evil moved the Divine—*Giustizia mosse il mio alto Fattore*¹—and Grace was born. He descended, the Aloof and the Transcendent, in all his love and compassion down into this vale of tears: he descended straight into our midst without halting anywhere in the infinite gradation that marks the distance between the highest and the lowest, he descended from the very highest into the very lowest, demanding nothing, asking for no condition whatsoever from the soul in Ignorance, from

¹ Dante: *Divina Commedia, Inferno, Canto III.4*
"Justice moved my great maker"

the earth under the grip of evil. Thus it was that Life lodged itself in the home of death, Light found its way into the far cavern of obscurity and inconscience, and Delight bloomed in the core of misery. Hope was lit, a flame rising from the nether gloom towards the Dawn. But for the spirit of denial we would not have seen this close and intimate figure of the gracious Mother.

This is the divine miracle that has been vouchsafed to man, the spectacle of the Divine himself becoming an earthly creature, wearing as his own body of flesh and blood this mortal frame of pain and suffering and ignorance, of obscurity and incapacity and falsehood. This is the calvary he has accepted, the sacrifice of his divinity he agreed to in order that the undivine too may gracefully serve the Divine, be taken up and transmuted into the reality from which it fell, of which it is an aberration.

The glory and beauty of this gesture one would not like not to have witnessed and experienced and shared.

Man and Superman

WHEN we speak of the superman we refer to a new race—almost a new species—that will appear on earth as the inevitable result of Nature's evolution. The new race will be developed out of the present humanity, there seems to be no doubt about that; it does not mean however that the whole of humanity will be so changed. As a matter of fact, humanity in general does not ask for such a catastrophic change in itself or for itself. But Supermanhood does mean a very radical change: it means giving up altogether many and some very basic human qualities and attributes. It does not aim merely at a moral uplift, that is to say, a shedding of the bad qualities, what are considered, for example, as predominantly animal and brutish in man; it signifies also a shedding of some at least of the good qualities or what are considered as such. The superman is not a purified moralised man, even as he is not a magnified glorified animal man; he is a man of a different type, qualitatively different. Let us take an analogy. What was the situation at the crisis when man was about to come out of (or be superimposed upon) an ape race? We can imagine a good part of that old race quite unwilling to go in for the new type that would appear to them queer, outlandish, even if not inferior on the whole or in some respects at least. They would not envisage with equanimity the disappearance of many of their cherished characteristics and powers: the glory of the tail, for example, the infinite capacity to swing and jump, the strength to crack a nut with the sheer force of the jaws. And who knows whether they would not consider their intelligence sharper and more efficacious than the type of reason, dull and slow, displayed before them by man! They would lose much to gain little. That would most probably be the general verdict.

Even so mankind, at the crucial parting of the ways, would very naturally look askance at the diminished value of many of its qualities and attributes in the new status to come. First of all, as it has been pointed out, the intellect and reasoning power will have to surrender and abdicate. The very power by which man has attained his present high status and maintains it in the world has to be sacrificed for something else called intuition or revelation whose value and efficacy are unknown and have to be rigorously tested. Anyhow, is not the known devil by far and large preferable to the unknown entity? And then the zest of life, peculiar to man, that works through contradictions—delight and suffering, victory and defeat, war and peace, doubt and knowledge, all the play of light and shade, the spirit of adventure, of combat and struggle and heroic effort, will have to go and give place to something, peaceful and harmonious perhaps but monotonous, insipid, unprogressive. The very character of human life is its passion to battle through, even if it is not always “through”. For it is often said that the end or goal does not matter, the goal is always something uncertain; it is the way, the means, the immediate action that is of supreme consequence: for it is that that tests man’s manhood, gives him the value he may have. And above all man is asked to give up the very thing which he has laboured to build up through millenniums of his terrestrial life, his individuality, his personality, for the demand is that he must lose his ego in order to attain the superhuman status.

So, the probability is that a large part of humanity will remain wedded to the normal human life. But this does not lessen in any way the value, the tremendous importance of what happens to the other part, may be, not insignificant or inconsiderable. Along with those that doubt and deny, there will be those who believe and affirm, who will stand for divinisation, whatever dehumanisation it may imply.

Now, one may ask, what would be the relation between the two humanities—the human and the divine? And what would be the effect of the appearance of the new race upon the older stock? Here again we can take up the animal analogy. How has the advent of man affected the animal kingdom? It has affected to a certain extent, even to a considerable extent,

one may venture to say. First of all, man has parked around him a fairly large group of animals, domesticated them, as it is termed, employing them in his service, using them for his purposes. Furthermore, he has gone out into the woods, the forests and mountains, ice-bound regions and deep seas, and there extended his sphere of influence, hunting and capturing animals that were so long free and unmolested, bringing about a change in the conditions of life even among wild animals. We do not say that the superman will deal with man in the same way (although something of the kind may be found in the Nietzschean ideology). For man was a creature of Ignorance, and his behaviour and influence were naturally of the ignorant kind. The superman, however, being delivered of ignorance and living in perfect knowledge, has a different nature and outlook. He is one with the universe, with all its creatures; united with the Divine, he finds and realises his own self in each and every creature and thing: his character and conduct are the automatic expression of this sense of perfect identity. So he can do nothing that may seek to enslave or do real injury to mankind. On the contrary, his love and his knowledge, being one with the cosmic existence, will inevitably work for the progress and welfare of man too; indeed, his will be the perfect aid that even ordinary humanity can ask for and receive.

In spite of all the achievements he has had in the past, and in spite of the cul-de-sac or the blind alley into which he seems now to be stagnating, there is yet possibility enough for man to progress further, that is to say, even as a human being without taking the more audacious jump into supermanhood. The present miseries of human society, the maldistribution of the necessities of life, the ravages of illness and disease, the prevalence of ignorance, are not and need not after all be a permanent and irrevocable feature of human organisation. They can be remedied to a large extent, and society made more decent to live in, even though it may not be transfigured into the City of God. Man, without foregoing his present human nature, can yet be a more humane and humanistic creature, that is to say, more truly human and less animal and demoniac that he is trying to be. To this end the advent and the presence of the divine race will surely contribute in a

large measure. The influence which the individuals of such a race will exert by the force of their luminous consciousness and the impact of their purified living, the sympathy and knowledge and comprehension which their very presence carries, will materially alter the nature and composition of the normal man and his society. There will emerge a sort of higher humanity—an intermediary between the present more or less animal, degraded humanity and the divine humanity of the future. The two humanities may very well live amicably together and be of help and service to each other.

We may mention here the other extreme possibility also. If, for example, the old humanity in a body rejects the New Man and will not allow him an inch of ground on the earth which it holds now as its fief and domain—as it may very well do—in view of the evidence that we have of the envy, jealousy, hatred, incomprehension moving normal men when they come in contact with men who do not follow their mode of life, who seem to pursue avocations that are meaningless and even perhaps injurious to them; if such is the case, then, we say, it would mean either the end of humanity, in the same way as some species have become in fact extinct, or its reversion to a wild savage state, something like that (or perhaps worse) out of which it came.

Either you accept the Divine and allow yourself to be influenced and moulded by it; in that case you are in the line of progress and fulfilment. Or else if you stand against and come into clash with the Power that drives inevitably towards its high goal, then the result is, in the graphic words of the Bible:

“And whatsoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whatsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”¹

¹ *St. Matthew*, 21

True Charity

CHARITY is commonly understood to consist in rendering material help to your fellow men, giving alms to the poor, medicine to the sick, money or material to those who need them and physical service also where that is required. All this is well and good. The world is ridden with diseases and privations and calamities. And if something is done to alleviate them, it is as it should be, activities in that direction deserve full encouragement. But this does not go far enough, does not touch the root of the matter. It is the human way of dealing with things and must naturally be very limited in its scope and efficacy. There is a higher, a diviner way—the way of the Spirit—for the cure of earthly ills, cure and not mere alleviation. That was the secret inspiration behind the message of the Christ and the Buddha.

It is not true that when one's wants are met, one always becomes or remains happy; all paupers are not unhappy, nor are the affluent invariably happy. Happiness is a quality that depends upon something else and comes from elsewhere: it is not directly proportional to material well-being. Unhappiness too is a psychological entity and consists in a special vibration of mind and vitality—and consequently of the physical being—due to a warp in the consciousness itself, in the core of the inner personality. The material conditions serve only to manifest it, maintain or aggravate it, but do not create it—truly they are created by it. That is why the spiritual healers always refer to the bliss of the Spirit as the sole remedy for physical ills even, for disease, misery and death. And the unhappy mortals are always called to turn to the Divine alone in their distress—*bhajasva mām*.

True charity consists in laying the healing balm upon the

sore that lies hidden behind all external miseries which derive from that source and sustainer. And it is in the sole possession of him alone who has found the bliss of the Spirit and dwells in it always. Such a person does not require external accessories for his work of healing and comforting. He need do nothing apparently; he may even appear to be aloof and indifferent. But his presence itself is a healing power: the patient feels it and wonders at the ease and happiness that come into him as if from nowhere. Many physicians have this kind of healing power; indeed without that, a mere medical man, with his pharmacopoeia, is no physician. It may not be well known and recognised, but it is a fact that a good part of the efficacy of medicines lies in the subtle influence, the vital health, that the doctor puts into his medicine or even directly into the body of his patient. And in the case of a spiritual *Bhishak*, the power can be raised to the n^{th} degree. The healer need not even be present at all physically near the patient; his influence can act very well from any distance. It is quite natural and inevitable that it should be so. For the healing power is in the spiritual consciousness, the inalienable bliss of one's status in the Spirit. One becomes identified with each and every object—person or thing—in one's own self, in the true being and substance; and the light and happiness that one possesses there inalienably go out in a spontaneous flow to others who are not really others but integral parts and portions of the same self.

This condition is attained, fully and sovereignly, when there is absolute egolessness, when there is no consciousness of a separate person, the dual consciousness of the helper and the helped, the reformer and the reformed, the doctor and the patient. The normal human sense of values is based upon such a division, upon egohood, *mamatvam*. A philanthropic man helps others through a sense of sympathy giving rise to a sense of duty and obligation. This feeling of pity, of commiseration is dangerous, for it puts you in a frame of mind that tends to make you look down upon, take a superior air towards your object of pity. You become self-conscious, with the consciousness of your inferior self, that you are helping others, doing good to the world, doing something that raises your value: this sense of personal merit is only another name

for vanity. Vanity and ambition are the motive powers that lie behind the philanthropical spirit born of sympathy. To denote a shade of meaning different from what is usually conveyed by the word "sympathy", modern psychology has found another word—"emipathy". Sympathy may be said to be the relation or contact between two egos; it is a link or bridge between two separate and independent entities; empathy, on the other hand, means the entering into the very being and consciousness of another, becoming that other one; it is identification and identity. This again is what spiritual consciousness alone can do. Sympathy leads to philanthropy, empathy is the origin of true charity, the spiritual compassion of a Buddha or a Christ. Philanthropy is human, charity (*caritas*) is divine.

Varieties of Religious Experience

THERE have been religions, approaches to the Divine, which did not believe in the divinity of man, the Chaldean line, the Semitic, for example. According to these, the Creator and the created are separate in nature and being; to call anything created as God himself is blasphemy. The ancient Egyptian, the Hebrew or the Muslim place God high in Paradise, and, in their view, man can be only his servant or slave, his worker or warrior. Man is too small and too earthly to be ever identified with God: he can only be a worshipper. Man can love God, at the most, as his Beloved. But this devotion is for something afar, like the desire of the moth for the star. And to equate the two is to confuse realities. Man as worshipper and devotee can attain certain divine qualities, but limited and modified and always humanised to a large extent. And God can never become man. He sends down his representative, his vicar, prophet or apostle who acts for him and in and through whom He acts, but He himself does not come down and put on the form of flesh. The universe is God's handiwork and testifies to his miracle and glory; but the universe is not God. Between the watch and the watchmaker there is always a hiatus and an incommensurability.

But can we say, 'I am born of God, and yet I am not God'? So the Indian boldly declares, all this is the supreme Divine, there is nothing else than the Divine—*sarvam khalvidam brahma*—I am He, Thou art That, or again, that which is in me and the conscious being which is there in the Sun are one and the same thing. God has created man and the world, He is in man and in the world, He has become and is man and the world. Not only so. Not only does God become the clod of earth by reducing his potential—to zero, so to say; but He

descends often enough in his own being and consciousness here below, assuming a human form for a special work and a special purpose. This is the Indian conception of Avatarhood.

The Christian conception seems to occupy an intermediary position, being a sort of connecting link between the two. Christ is not only the Son of God, he is also the God-Man—he declares very clearly and categorically that he and the Father in heaven are one and that everyone should be as perfect as God himself. Still a difference is maintained. First of all, with regard to the birth. The God-Man was not born in sin like ordinary mortals, an immaculate virgin gave him birth. And with regard to the union or identity of Father and Son, the fusion is not absolute. Man is asked to be as pure and perfect as God, but only in kind and not in being and substance. The purified and perfect souls sit by the side of God in heaven, they do not lose themselves in God. The Vaishnava conception in India was in the same line. The liberated soul, according to it, dwells with God in the same world, possesses God's qualities—the union is that of *Salokya* and *Sadharmaya*—but it does not become one and indivisible with God (*Sayujya*).

The Sufi doctrine also occupies an intermediate position, like the Christian, between the Chaldean and the Vedantic. The absolute identity of the human lover and the Divine Beloved, a complete fusion of the two at a particular stage or moment of consciousness is one of the cardinal experiences in the Sufi discipline. But that is an innermost state, not normal or habitual in life and activity, where the difference, the separation between the adorer and the adored is maintained exactly for the delight of play. But the dualism in the Indian discipline is more than compensated by the doctrine of Incarnation which obliterates fundamentally all difference between the human and the Divine. According to it, God does not become man only once, as in the Christian view, but that it is one of his constant functions. Indeed, the Indian tradition is that He is always the leader of terrestrial evolution; at each crisis, at each moment of need for guidance, He comes down in flesh and blood, in the form of an earthly creature to show the way, how to live and move and act.

The special gift of the Chaldean line of discipline lay in

another direction. It cultivated not so much the higher lines of spiritual realisation but was occupied with what may be called the mid regions, the occult world. This material universe is not moved by the physical, vital or mental forces that are apparent and demonstrable, but by other secret and subtle forces; in fact, these are the motive forces, the real agents that work out and initiate movements in Nature, while the apparent ones are only the external forms and even masks. This occultism was also practised very largely in ancient Egypt from where the Greeks took up a few threads. The Mysteries—Orphic and Eleusinian—cultivated the tradition within a restricted circle and in a very esoteric manner. The tradition continued into the Christian Church also and an inner group formed in its heart that practised and kept alive something of this ancient science. The external tenets and dogmas of the Church did not admit or tolerate this which was considered as black magic, the Devil's Science. The evident reason was that if one pursued this line of occultism and tasted of the power it gave, one might very likely deviate from the straight and narrow path leading to the Spirit and spiritual salvation. In India too the *siddhis* or occult powers were always shunned by the truly spiritual, although sought by the many who take to the spiritual life—often with disastrous results. In Christianity, side by side with the major saints, there was always a group or a line of practicers that followed the occult system, although outwardly observing the official creed. It is curious to note that often where the original text of the Bible speaks of *gods*, in the plural, referring to the deities or occult powers, the official version translates it as God, to give the necessary theistic value and atmosphere.

But if occultism is to be feared because of its wrong use and potential danger, spirituality too should then be placed on the same footing. All good things in the world have their deformation and danger, but that is no reason why one should avoid them altogether. What is required is right attitude and discrimination, training and discipline. Viewed in the true light, occultism is dynamic spirituality; in other words, it seeks to express and execute, bring down to the material life the powers and principles of the Spirit through the agency of the subtler forces of mind and life and the subtle physical.

Occultism is naturally shunned by those who worship, who seek to experience the transcendent Spirit, God in Heaven, but it is an indispensable instrument for those who endeavour to manifest the Divine in a concrete form.

Children and Child Mentality

CHILDREN are often found to be very cruel to animals. Why is it so? Their treatment of birds especially is notorious. To seek out nests and pull them down, to capture nestlings and put them to all kinds of torture, to pick up eggs and dash them to pieces are for children most interesting games. They seem to take particular delight in varying and enhancing as much as possible the torture they can inflict. One reason that can be adduced for the callousness of a child's sensibility is his self-centredness: he is wholly himself, isolated from others, has not yet learnt the social needs and virtues. All he does and feels is for himself, for his own pleasure and free self-assertion. His growing individuality, in order to grow, cuts itself aloof from others and loses the sense of others having the same value as itself. Being self-regarding, to that extent he ceases to be other-regarding. Fellow-feeling is a sentiment that grows later on, as the result of shocks in mutual interchange. Real sympathy is a movement of mature consciousness.

The inquisitiveness that so strongly possesses a child is also the drive of an awakening and growing consciousness. He indulges in breaking, tearing, ripping because of this curiosity, this keen edge of a developing and experimenting consciousness. It seems to be hard and unfeeling, even an aberration, precisely because of the egocentric nature of the child consciousness yet unfamiliar with values normal to age and experience.

But if it is nature to a certain extent that makes the child so apathetic, self-regarding and cruel, it is not the only cause and it is not the whole story. There are other very active factors in life that affect and mould the child's consciousness from the very beginning.

The child, we can take, comes into the world with a more or less clean slate to record the reactions of life. In the early period he is still nearer his psychic being which is not yet thrown back or covered over by the impacts and impressions of the world. The first conscious contacts with the world are not generally happy for the child. He meets things all around that go against the grain of his still sensitive psychic consciousness. The first quarrel he witnesses between his parents, the first rough behaviour or movement of an elder that shakes his attention, the first lie that he hears uttered by his teacher, act almost as shellshocks to his nerves. And as he grows, lessons like these are showered upon him from all sides and no wonder if his consciousness very soon gets warped and twisted, he too begins his own game in the line he observes and experiences. Only, not being guided or controlled by reason and experience, he overdoes the thing, and because of his age, what in an adult is a matter of course, trivial and insignificant, looms large and ominous in his case. The surroundings in which a child lives and grows form the atmosphere which he breathes in at every moment and if there is poison in it, he inhales and imbibes the poison which becomes part of his substance and nature. A pure environment is needed for a pure life impulse to shape and develop itself.

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What is the very central character of the child consciousness? It is confidence in life, the surety that nothing can baulk the fulfilment of life's purpose, the trust that overrides all set-backs and stumbles, gaily passes through dangers and difficulties. This confidence, this assurance the very body shares in and impels it to movements of daring and adventure. It is this that is the cause of the body's growth, and so long as it is maintained, keeps the body young. So the poet says:

— A simple child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?¹

¹ Wordsworth: "We Are Seven".

Age sets in precisely when there is a fall in this self-confidence and assurance of the body consciousness, when the body begins to fear, becomes too cautious and apprehensive. A wound, a cut, even a broken limb would not stop a child normally to go forward with the same dash and carelessness. And that character is the source not only of his physical fitness and growth, but also that of a mental alacrity and soundness which is an inestimable possession of the child consciousness. The wisest teacher is he who does not teach too much the wisdom of prudence and moderation, but encourages this *élan vital*, the life urge, in the child and yet seeks to organise and canalise it, as an efficient instrument of high ideals and purposes.

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There are two failings which a teacher must guard against—to which he is usually prone—if he wishes to secure respect and obedience and trust from children: (1) telling a lie and (2) losing temper. A child can easily find out whether you are spinning a long yarn or not. He is inquisitive, irrepressively curious and, above all, he has his own manner and angle of looking at things. He puts questions about all things and subjects and in all ways that seem queer to an adult view. His answers too to questions, his solutions of problems are very unorthodox, bizarre. But it is all the more the task of the elder not only to put up with all these vagaries, but also with great sympathy and patience to appreciate and understand what the child attempts to express. If you get irritated or angry and try to snub or brush him away, it would mean the end of all cordial relation between you and him. Or, again, if you try to hoodwink him, give a false answer to hide your ignorance, in that case too the child will not be deceived, he will find you out and lose all respect for you. It is far better to own your ignorance, saying you do not know than to pose as a knowing man; although that may affect to some extent his sense of hero-worship and he may not entertain any longer the unspoilt awe and esteem with which he was accustomed to look up to you, still you will not lose his affection and confidence. Infinite patience and a temper that is never frayed or ruffled are demanded of the teacher and the parent

who wish to guide and control successfully and happily a child. With that you can mould in the end the most refractory child, without that you will fail even with a child of goodwill.

The Soul of a Nation

A NATION is a living personality; it has a soul, even like a human individual. The soul of a nation is also a *psychic* being, that is to say, a conscious being, a formation out of the Divine Consciousness and in direct contact with it, a power and aspect of Mahashakti. A nation is not merely the sum total of the individuals that compose it, but a collective personality of which the individuals are as it were cells, like the cells of a living and conscious organism. The psychic being or soul of a nation is indeed conscious; it knows its *raison d'être*, its life purpose, its destiny, the rôle it has to play in the divine scheme as the divine instrument. And its will—for it has a will, the expression of its consciousness, the Divine's impulse in and through it—is inevitable, sooner or later it will fulfil itself. Even like the soul of a man, the nation's soul is behind all the movements that form its external life, supporting, building, guiding its political, economic, social or cultural make-up. The individual can know of and come in contact with the nation's soul in and through his own soul. When one becomes conscious of his psychic being then only one is in a condition to be conscious of the psychic being of the collective person of his nation or the nation with which he has inner affinity.

There are periods in the life cycle of a nation, critical moments, when it is in deadly peril, when its very existence is threatened, attacked by enemy forces either from within or from without. Such was the case when, for example, Britain was invaded by the Spanish Armada or when France was being subjugated by England. Those were very anxious times, but in each instance the soul of the nation came forward and inspired the nation to react and go through the ordeal and survive. Jeanne d'Arc may be considered as the

embodiment of France's national soul, as on a still earlier occasion that same soul embodied itself in St. Geneviève. But a nation may fall on much more evil days, namely, when it loses contact with its very soul, goes astray, its life movement taking a wrong curve. A nation can deny its soul, even as an individual may and the result is disaster. Germany is a terrible example of such a tragedy in our own day.

India is offering a spectacle of another tragedy. What is happening here is the attack of a disease that is convulsing the body politic: it seems to be a cancerous disease, the limbs seeking to grow independently at the expense of each other. The patient is passing through a very critical period and it is indeed a question of life and death. But we hope—we are sure—that the soul of this ancient nation will assert itself and through whatever vicissitudes re-establish health and harmony: for that soul's mission is yet to be done.

Like the individual a nation too dies. Ancient Greece and Rome, Egypt and Babylon and Chaldea are no more. What has happened to their souls, it may be asked. Well, what happens to the soul of the individual when the body falls away? The soul returns to the soul-world. Like the individual Psyche the collective Psyche too goes and retires into the womb of peace and light with all its treasures, its beauty and glory gathered in, like a bird that goes to sleep within its folded wings. What the Greek culture and civilisation was still continues to exist in its quintessential reality in a world to which one has access if one has the requisite kinship of consciousness and psychic opening. That soul lives in its own domain, with all the glory of its achievement and realisation at their purest; and from there it sheds its lustre, exerts its influence, acts as living leaven in the world's cultural heritage and spiritual growth.

When however the soul withdraws, when a nation in a particular cycle of its soul manifestation has fulfilled its rôle and mission, the body of the nation falls gradually into decadence. The elements that composed the organic reality, the living consistency of national life disintegrate, lose their energy and cohesive capacity; they die out and are dispersed or persist for a time as a confused mixture of disconnected and mechanically moving cells. But it may happen too that

in an apparently dying or dead nation, the soul that retired comes back again, not in its old form and mode of life—for that cannot be—Egypt, if it lives again today cannot repeat the ages of the Pharaohs and the Pyramids—but in a new personality, with a fresh life purpose. In such a case what happens is truly a national resurrection—a Lazarus coming back to life at the touch of the Divine.

We do not believe that India was ever completely dead or hopelessly moribund: her soul, although not always in front, was ever present as a living force, presiding over and guiding her destiny. That is why there is a perennial capacity for renewal in her and the capacity to go through dire ordeals. And to live up to her genius, she too must know how to march with the time, that is to say, not to cling to old and past forms—to be faithful to the ancient soul does not mean eternising the external frames and formulas that expressed that soul one time or another. Indeed the soul becomes alive and vigorous when it finds a new disposition of the life plan which can embody and translate a fresh creative activity, a new fulfilment emanating from the depths of the soul.

The Soul and its Journey

1

WHEN a man dies, his soul or psychic being, after a time goes to the psychic world and takes rest there till the hour comes to take birth again in another body upon earth. There are then these two periods in the life after death. First, the passage and next the rest. The passage means the gradual shedding of all the other sheaths or envelopes that surround the psychic being and form its earthly frame. With the physical body has to go also the subtle body, then the vital and finally the mental too. The reason why one does not remember the past lives is this that one leaves behind the instrument of memory—the brain mind—with one's death. One does not carry over with the psychic being the other parts that constitute the terrestrial life. They are dispersed and dissolved in their respective cosmic spheres. The subtle body gives up its elements to the subtle physical plane, the vital elements are taken up into the vital world and the mental elements go into the mental world,—unless the psychic being is highly developed and has organised around itself as its instrument of self-expression any of these elements. In that case, as much of the terrestrial parts—namely, of the subtle body and life and mind—as have come into direct contact with the psychic and have allowed themselves to be moved and moulded by its consciousness, will alone persist and share in the immortality of the soul. Normally, the elements of the human vehicle form a loose and unorganised aggregate mass round the psychic centre. When the centre withdraws, they too fall off automatically and are scattered into the universal storehouse of Nature. Only when they have been organised and when

they have attained a definite form and character expressing something of the psychic nature, can they maintain their identity, for this identity is part and parcel of the psychic identity.

I have said that the memory of past lives is effaced because of the effacement of the instrument. But there is a higher memory which is the attribute of the psychic consciousness. The psychic being is made of light and knowledge: it knows, rather it sees and can survey the whole curve of its past growth and development. Of course, it may not see or remember—very often it does not—all the physical details of things and happenings of an earthly life, the hundred incidents, accidents and contingencies that are not directly linked to its consciousness. But all things that have had its touch and have contributed to its growth and development and have in their turn received its influence—objects, persons, happenings or movements—find themselves harboured in the psychic memory. And thus the only sure way of remembering the past, remembering, that is to say, what is worth remembering, is to go into the psychic being, possess the psychic consciousness. There one has the whole panorama of the soul's odyssey revealed. Any other way leads only to imagination, conjecture and delusion.

2

The passage between death and the arrival at final rest in the psychic world is a most difficult and dangerous ordeal for the human being. He has left the protection of the body and has not yet found the refuge in the psychic: he is obsessed and pulled back by his past—the desires, the hungers, the attractions and repulsions, the plans unfulfilled, problematic schemes—all haunt him still, things done, things not done crowd around him and fetter his forward march. Not only his own Karma, but the Karma of others too pursues him: all persons with whom he has had relation, who think of him now, pity him, mourn for him, lament his absence, raise so many hurdles and obstacles in his path, oblige him to turn and look back. Again, there are forces and personalities in

the intermediate worlds with whom the poor disembodied creature has now to come in contact, and not unoften he feels like one unskinned and all his nerves on edge open helplessly to rough and painful impacts.

Indeed, although it may sound somewhat strange and wonderful, nevertheless it is literally true that the body is the fortress *par excellence* for the individual being: it is not merely an ugly dirty clothing that has to be cast off so that one may go straight to the enjoyment of the beatitude of Paradise; on the contrary, it is, as it were, an armour, a steel-frame that protects the subtle body against the attacks or harsh and cruel touches of other worlds and their beings. Once outside the body, there is every danger for the individual to go astray and be hurt, unless he is guided and protected by a guardian angel, as Dante has had Virgil as his Maestro. We may note here that the passage of Dante from Hell through Purgatory to Heaven across their various levels is almost an exact image of what happens to a soul after death. The highest Heaven where Dante meets Beatrice may be considered as the psychic world and Beatrice herself the Divine Grace that bathes, illumines and comforts the psychic being.

If one has, however, within oneself an ardent and sincere and unflickering flame, one can go through more or less easily and unscathed; but that is rare. Even when alive, in sleep one goes out often into other worlds and the foreign and unpleasant contacts and experiences he has there are recorded in the brain-mind as nightmares: on such occasions the best way to escape is to rush back into the body, the best place of safety. Many have this experience of rushing headlong into the body—dropping into the body, as it were—in order to escape from a threatening danger in sleep and waking up all on a sudden to find to one's relief that all was illusion and hallucination.

An easy and quick passage to the place of rest, that is what the being needs and asks for after death. This is determined by one's Karma in life and the last wish and prayer at the moment of death—for the force of consciousness at this critical moment acts not only upon the character of the passage but also upon the character even of the next birth. Apart from one's own merit, one can be helped by others also who are

still upon earth and who claim to be his friends and relatives and well-wishers—not in the way they think they do at present, that is to say, by grieving and lamenting or even by performing rites and ceremonies, these often retard rather than accelerate the passage, but by an inner detachment and calm prayer and goodwill: oftener perhaps to forget the departed is the best way to help him. A truly conscious help can be given only by one who has the requisite occult power and spiritual realisation—the Guru, for example.

3

Once in its place of rest the soul enjoys profound peace and delight and is in a kind of luminous sleep. There it assimilates all the experiences of its last life, that is to say, imbibes out of them all the substance that goes to increase and strengthen its consciousness, the sap that lends itself to the growth of the build and stature of the being. These experiences are meant to bring the soul nearer—each life being one step nearer—to the fullness of its union with the Divine Consciousness out of which it came originally upon earth as a mere spark, a parcel yet apart. This process may be short or long according to the nature of assimilation undertaken. Here also the being prepares for the impending birth, that is to say, gathers all the elements that will be required for the play of the consciousness in that life. A broad planning too is made here, a scheme in outline of the kind of experiences that one will need for the particular growth of consciousness envisaged. Some forces of consciousness, out of the stock developed and assembled by the being, are kept back, in reserve, others are brought forward for immediate use in the life to be lived next. All this, however, is not the deliberate rational process of the mind, it is something spontaneous, involved, a luminous brooding and incubation, something like the trance of Brahman within which the seed of creation is about to germinate.

The psychic being is a packet of gathered power, a charged battery, as it were; when it comes down upon earth, it calls round itself elements of mind and vital and even subtle physical needed for the purpose of the particular life experience, and

even those that would go to constitute the physical body. The psychic being usually picks up these elements of mind and life and body out of the universal store-house of earth's atmosphere as it needs them, in the same way as it returns them there on the journey back after death. But as I have already said, there are beings who have developed well-formed personalities of mind and life and even of the physical consciousness. These formations are not mere loose accretions, temporary arrangements for a life experience, but are welded, organised, given a more or less permanent shape, as the proper instrument of the psychic being, as its own expression. In such cases, the outer personality too continues to exist as an essential mode or vibration in and with the psychic consciousness itself and when the soul descends upon earth, is in contact with the earth's atmosphere, it projects out of itself the external personality and formation. This does not mean certainly that the personality remains something fixed and rigid, but that it has attained an essential fullness of form and yet retains the capacity for further change and growth through further growth of the psychic being in other life experiences.

Now the time and occasion for a particular birth of the soul depends naturally on the inner need of that being. But it must be noted—as it is a fact in the occult world—that the souls are not so many absolutely separate unrelated autonomous self-sufficient entities, each one coming and going as and when it chooses and likes: on the contrary, the souls form groups or families according to some secret affinity. And when they come down, they do so not unoften in company. A call goes, a bell is rung as it were intimating that the hour is come and they rush down. And it may even happen that in rushing down a psychic being is not too careful or fastidious about the instrument, the vehicle he chooses to inhabit; whatever is handy and nearest and on the whole suitable to his purpose he takes up and goes forward. He takes it all as an adventure and has the joy of battle and the warrior spirit that can taste of victory only when hard fought and won. That is how we meet not unoften a considerable discrepancy between the inner being of a man and his earthly tenement, his soul and his external character and physical nature. There is a

meaning in the choice, a significance in the utilisation of unfavourable conditions: there is a method in the madness.

This grouping will appear natural and inevitable when we bear in mind the purpose of creation and the rôle of the psychic consciousness. For it is not a matter of individual salvation, of the unilateral growth and development and fulfilment of an individual psychic being. The soul is a luminous point in an inconscient universe and its rôle is to make it conscious, at least a representative portion of it. The psychic being's activity is the means of a new creation, the transmutation of the earth-consciousness, the growth and advent of a divine race, the manifestation and embodiment of the Divine and his play upon earth. The souls are the warriors, playmates, the beloved of the Lord. They have to assemble and move together for the interest of the play. They have to be in companies and regiments and battalions, in associations and concert and harmonised formations.

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The souls group themselves into natural types according to the fundamental mode of consciousness and its dynamism. And they form a hierarchy: they exist and function in an organisation, the type and pattern of which is the pyramid. At the apex is the One Supreme, at the base the infinity of individual and disparate souls, earthly sparks, that are emanations, derivations, scattered condensations, parts and parcels of that One Supreme. In between, from the top towards the bottom, lie in a graded scale formations more and more specialised, particularised and concretised: as we rise we meet the larger, vaster more comprehensive forms of the same entities till we arrive at the typical and original, the source being. Thus we can view a soul along its line of emanation from the central source as a series of beings, the higher enclosing and encompassing the lower. Not only so, a higher entity can have several lower emanations and each of these again can emanate several others. The number of emanations multiply as one goes down and they decrease as one goes up. We can understand now what is meant when we speak of

kindred souls. When there is an inexplicable natural affinity or similarity between two souls, it happens in such a case that the souls are emanations of the same Over-Soul. And it happens also sometimes that the guardian angel or daemon whom one may contact is none other than one's own Over-Soul. The term Over-Soul takes thus a literal and a profound significance.

We may illustrate here a little. At the apex of the pyramid of existence is the Divine, the Supreme Person, the Purushotama. Even there as He begins to lean and look down, He expresses himself at the very outset as the dual personality of Ishwara and Shakti (the Divine Father and the Divine Mother) — *sa dvitīyam aicchat*, as the Upanishad says. That is still the Divine in His highest transcendent status, *parāṭpara*. Next, this dual or biune or divalent reality shows itself or throws itself further out in a fourfold valency of the dynamic truth consciousness, creating and leading the cosmic evolution. The Four Aspects of Ishwara, forming the male or *puruṣa* line, are the great names: Mahavira, Balarama, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. And the corresponding four aspects of Ishwari form the other great quaternary: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. They embody the four major attributes of the Divine in his relation to the created universe: Knowledge, Power, Love and skill in work. They also represent thus a divine fourfold order. The first embodies the Brahmin quality of large wisdom, wide comprehension; a vast consciousness; the second has the Kshatriya quality of force, dynamism, concentration and drive of energy; the third possesses the Vaishya quality of harmony, beauty, mutuality and the fourth has the Shudra quality of perfect execution, thoroughness in detailed working, order and arrangement.

The higher Gods, like those, for example, envisaged in the Veda, may be considered each as an emanation of one or other of these Divine Aspects. They are dwellers of Swar or the Overmind. Varuna seems to be an emanation of Mahavira, a son of Maheshwari: for he is pre-eminently the god of the pure and vast consciousness who releases us from the triple bonds and shows us the winding way into the embrace of the infinite Mother. His associate, Mitra, is the lord of love and harmony, evidently an emanation of Pradyumna (or Maha-

lakshmi). Other gods of the same category are Bhaga and Soma. The Balarama or Mahakali aspect is manifested in Aryaman: Rudra being another form of the same. And Mahasaraswati (or Aniruddha) must have given birth to and inspired the Ribhus, who are artisans of divinity. The Puranic trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—with Indra as the fourth member forms a parallel system embodying a similar conception.

Another tradition gives the Four Supernals as (1) Light or Consciousness, (2) Truth or Knowledge, (3) Life and (4) Love. The tradition also says that the beings representing these four fundamental principles of creation were the first and earliest gods that emanated from the Supreme Divine, and that as they separated themselves from their source and from each other, each followed his own independent line of fulfilment, they lost their divinity and turned into their opposites—Light became obscurity, Consciousness unconsciousness or the inconscient, Truth became falsehood and Knowledge ignorance, Life became death and finally Love and Delight became suffering and hatred. These are the fallen angels, the Asuras that deny their divine essence and now rule the world. They have possessed mankind and are controlling earthly existence. They too have their emanations, forces and beings that are born out of them and serve them in their various degrees of power. Men talk and act inspired and impelled by these beings and when they do so, they lose their humanity and become worse than animals.

But still the Pure Reality descends undeviated in its own line and man enshrines that within him, the undying fire that will clean him and bear him to the source from where he came. And there are luminous godheads that help him and wish themselves to participate in the terrestrial transformation. There is a pressure from above and there is an urge from below, between these two infinities all is ground and moulded and changed. Even the Lords of Denial will in the end change and learn to affirm, become again what they truly were and are.

First then there are the supreme divinities, aspects or own personalities of the Divine in his supreme status, the Supermind; next come the first emanations, the true or pure gods in the Overmind. Thence or simultaneously there is the line of deformation, that of the false gods and godheads, the Asuras and Titans. These too extend in a series of emanations down to the subtle physical; except when they themselves incarnate on the earth in an earthly body.

Man, the soul, we said, comes direct from the Divine and is thrown and almost stuck into the earth as a spark, as a point of luminous consciousness-force. This soul, as it develops, we find, belongs to one or other of the fundamental type of divine personality, it is a lineal descendant, as it were, of one of the quaternary and its growth means growing into the nature of that particular godhead and its fulfilment means identification with that.

We may try to illustrate by examples, although it is a rather dangerous game and may tend to put into a too rigid and mathematical formula something that is living and variable. Still it will serve to give a clearer picture of the matter. Napoleon evidently was a child of Mahakali; and Caesar seems to have been fashioned largely by the principle of Maheshwari; while Christ or Chaitanya are clearly emanations in the line of Mahalakshmi. Constructive geniuses, on the other hand, like the great statesman Colbert, for example, or Louis XIV, *le grand monarque*, himself belong to a family (or *gotra*, as we say in India) that originated from Mahasaraswati. Poets and artists again, although generally they belong to the clan of Mahalakshmi, can be regrouped according to the principle that predominates in each, the godhead that presides over the inspiration in each. The large breath in Homer and Valmiki, the high and noble style of their movement, the dignity and vastness that compose their consciousness affiliate them naturally to the Maheshwari line. A Dante, on the other hand, or a Byron has something in his matter and manner that make us think of the stamp of Mahakali. Virgil or Petrarch, Shelley or our Tagore seem to be emanations of Beauty, Harmony, Love—Mahalakshmi. And the perfect artisanship

of Mahasaraswati has found its especial embodiment in Horace and Racine and our Kalidasa. Michael Angelo in his fury of inspirations seems to have been impelled by Mahakali, while Mahalakshmi sheds her genial favour upon Raphael and Titian; and the meticulous care and the detailed surety in a Tintoretto makes us think of Mahasaraswati's grace. Mahasaraswati too seems to have especially favoured Leonardo da Vinci, although a brooding presence of Maheshwari also seems to be intermixed there.

For it must be remembered that the human soul after all is not a simple and unilateral being, it is a little cosmos in itself. The soul is not merely a point or a single ray of light come down straight from its divine archetype or from the Divine himself, it is also a developing fire that increases and enriches itself through the multiple experiences of an evolutionary progression—it not only grows in height but extends in wideness also. Even though it may originally emanate from one principle and Personality, it takes in for its development and fulfilment influences and elements from the others also. Indeed, we know that the Four primal personalities of the Divine are not separate and distinct as they may appear to the human mind which cannot understand distinction without disparity. The Vedic gods themselves are so linked together, so interpenetrate one another that finally it is asserted that there is only one existence, only it is given many names. All the divine personalities are aspects of the Divine blended and fused together. Even so the human soul, being a replica of the Divine, cannot but be a complex of many personalities and often it may be difficult and even harmful to find and fix upon a dominant personality. The full flowering of the human soul, its perfect divinisation demands the realisation of a many-aspected personality, the very richness of the Divine within it.

PART SIX

The End of a Civilisation

THE world has been going down in its course of degradation with an increased momentum since the very beginning of the present century. One of the great symptoms of the decline is the prevalence of wars. It can be said in fact that there has been no real peace or even truce upon earth since the century opened with the Russo-Japanese War. Wars have continued since then uninterruptedly: some part or other of the world has always been involved. Indeed one can say it has been a single war carried on on many fronts, breaking out at different times. Another noticeable thing about these wars is their nature; with the lapse of time they have become more and more extensive and more and more devastating. It is no longer now simply a clash of armies or professionals, of that section of society whose business it is to fight. Whole nations—literally the whole of a people including men, women, children of all ages—are now mobilised, have to take part in the fight and share the same danger.

Naturally, war meant always killing; but the nature of killing has changed and even the motive too. Killing is now attended with cruelty, done with methods terribly atrocious and revoltingly ingenious. And this has affected the very consciousness and morale of man. Not only there is no decency or decorum, not to speak of magnanimity and nobility of attitude and behaviour—once familiar things in stories of the Kshatriya, the Samurai, the Knights of old—there has come into the field a phenomenon for which it has itself found a name, *sadism*, wanton violence and on a mass scale. Man seems to have thrown off all mask, all the rules of civilised social life and has become worse than the animal: he is now the Pisacha, the ghoulish and the demon. He seems to have reached the bottom of the pit.

We know of worlds—vital worlds—which are made of the most unimaginable horror and ugliness and devilry. Many have contacted such domains either consciously in the course of their yogic experiences or unconsciously in nightmare. They bear testimony to the stark monstrosity of these worlds—the gloom, the fear, the pain and torture, the doom and damnation that reign there. That entire inner world seems to have precipitated itself upon earth and taken a body here. A radiant poet spoke of Paradise being transplanted upon earth in the shape of a happy city (the city of the Raghus): today we have done the opposite miracle, the devil's capital city is installed upon earth, or even something worse. For, in the subtler worlds there is a saving grace, after all. If you have within you somewhere an aspiration, a trust, a faith, a light the enemy cannot touch you or maul you badly. You may have also around you there beings who help you, a teacher, a guide who is near visibly or invisibly to give you the necessary warning or protection. But here below when the enemy has clothed himself in a material form and armed himself with material weapons, you are almost helpless. To save yourself from a physical blow, it is not always enough to have the proper inner consciousness only. Something more is needed.

Therefore misery stalks large upon the earth. Nothing comparable to it, either in quality or quantity, can history offer as an example. Man finds no remedy for his ills, he does not dare to hope for any. He feels he is being irretrievably drawn into the arms of the Arch-enemy.

Perhaps it was necessary that it should be so. A *pralaya*, a Deluge has to be there to end an epoch and begin a new one. Indeed the civilisation that man has built up over the millenniums, that has reached its culmination in modern *scientism*, whatever gifts it might have brought to him, however great and powerful and beautiful it might have been at its best in its own sphere, still it had and was a limitation, acted as a deterrent to a further leap and progress of the consciousness. It is the humanistic cycle that has reigned, from ancient Greece down to modern America. Is it not time that another consciousness should intervene, other gods make their appearance?

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And yet if the civilisation really goes, it will not be a small thing, even when measured on the cosmic scale. A civilisation is to be judged and valued not at its nadir, but at its zenith, in its total effect and not by a temporary phase in its course. Civilisation really means preparation of the instrument: the human instrument that is to express the Divine. The purpose of creation, we have often said, is the establishment of the highest spiritual consciousness in the embodied life on earth. The embodied life means man's body and life and mind; individually and socially these constitute the instrument through which the higher light is to manifest itself. The instrument has to be prepared, made ready for the purpose. Actually it is obscure, ignorant, narrow, weak; at the outset and for a long time it expresses only or mainly the inferior animal nature. Civilisation is an attempt to raise this inferior nature, to refine, enlarge and heighten it, to cultivate and increase its potentialities and capacities. The present civilisation, we have said, is a growth of thousands of years—at least five thousand years according to the most modest archaeological computation. In this period man has developed his brain, his rational intelligence, has unravelled some of the great mysteries of nature; he has controlled and organised life to an extent that has opened new possibilities of growth and achievement; even with respect to the body he has learnt to treat it with greater skill and endowed it with finer and more potent efficiencies. There have been aberrations and misuses, no doubt; but the essence of things achieved still remains and is always an invaluable asset: that must not be allowed to go.

If the civilisation goes, it means the instrument is gone, the basis on which the edifice for the Divine Consciousness is to be raised is removed, nothing remains to stand firmly on. So the labour has to start again: one must begin from the beginning. The work has to be done and will be done, it cannot be allowed to terminate into a labour of Sisyphus.

Look at the individual. Why is there in him the life-urge to persist, to endure, to survive? If life had no other meaning than mere living, then the best thing would have been to drop the body as soon as it is badly damaged or incapacitated, through illness, accident or old age. Instead, why this attempt

to prolong it, to refuse to accept the present difficulties and disadvantages? The reason is that life requires time to grow in consciousness, to acquire experiences, to assimilate and utilise them so as to transform them into powers of being, time, that is to say, to build and forge the instrument so that it may house the higher consciousness and existence. In the present make-up, the body, at a certain stage has to be given up; for the frame becomes too rigid and stiff to keep pace with the growing and fast moving inner consciousness. The thread is taken up again in another life; but there is always a considerable reduplication in this *natural* process, one has to repeat the stage of babyhood and immaturity, a retempering of the instrument till it is capable of newer uses. True, something of the experiences, their essence, is stored up somewhere in the depth of the being; but it is not utilised fully, it is not an effective element in the normal consciousness. And although one always bases oneself upon one's past, the edifice constructed seems new every time. Yoga in the individual seeks to eliminate this element of repetition and unconsciousness and delay in the process of growth and evolution: its aim is to complete the cycle of individual growth in a single life.

Now the same principle can be extended to the wider collective development. Civilisation has reached a status today when the next higher status can be and must be attempted. Man has risen to a considerable height in the mental sphere; the time and occasion are now here to step beyond into the supramental, the dynamically spiritual. Dangers are ahead, even around and close: all the forces of the infra-human, the submerged urges of animal atavism are pushing and pulling man down to a regression, to a reversion to *type*. The choice is indeed crucial. If the civilisation is to perish, it means mankind has to start over again its life course, begin, that is to say, at the baby stage, once more to go through the slow process of centuries to acquire the mastery that has been attained in the physical, the vital and the mental domains. Already there have been such lost periods in man's evolution now submerged in his consciousness and their gains are being with difficulty recovered. But a landslide at this critical hour will be a colossal catastrophe—humanly speaking, something almost irremediable.

For here is the sense of the crisis. The *mantra* given for the new age is that man shall be transcended and in the process, man, as he is, shall go. Man shall go, but something of the vehicle that the present cycle has prepared will remain. For, that precisely has been the function of the passing civilisation, especially in its later stages, viz, to build up a terrestrial temple for the Lord. The aberration and deformation, rampant today, mean only an excess of stress upon this aspect, upon the external presentation which was ignored or not sufficiently considered in the earlier and higher curves of the present civilisation. The spiritual values have gone down, because the material values came to be regarded as valueless and this upset the economy or balance in Nature. It is true that we have gone far, too far in our *revanche*. And the problem that faces us today is this: whether mankind will be able to change sufficiently and grow into the higher being that shall inhabit the earth as its crown in the coming cycle or, being unable, will go totally, disappear altogether or be relegated to the backwater of earthly life, somewhat like the aboriginal tribes of today.

Darkness to Light

THE Darkness is the measure of the Light. The world as it is is exactly the opposite of what it has to be and shall be. And in order to be what it shall be it had to become what it is now, just not that which it will be. The antipodes go together unavoidably: the depth of the precipice is the precise measure of the height. Man's fall represents the ascent he has to make, he is destined to make.

Hurdles and obstacles are put there in the way: not merely to test your strength, but to train it, to increase it, to discipline it. Difficulties abound precisely because by overcoming them you attain to the fullness of your perfection. You have been built with elements and forces that are exactly in keeping with what you are expected to do with them: you are placed in the midst of conditions and circumstances that are absolutely in proportion to what you have to realise. Indeed you carry within yourself all the difficulties that are necessary to make your realisation perfection itself.

When you receive a blow, do not draw back or blink and sink down: hold up your head with courage and fortitude and say to yourself, here is another opportunity given to take another step forward. The blow is a finger of light pointed towards a dark spot to be illumined, a weak link that has to be forged anew. In meeting and surmounting a difficulty you add another degree to your ascension, another sinew as it were to your muscle. Remember a difficulty is never out of proportion to your strength: it comes in the exact measure of your power to face it. It is your mind, your notion that makes the contrary suggestion, a kind of illusion possesses you that you are beyond your depth and must go adrift.

You may not be able to do the ideal things at a given mo-

ment. You may not command the perfect gesture that is expected of you in a set of circumstances; the Divine may seem to be veiled from you and you do not hear the direct voice. But it does not matter. What is expected of you is to do your best, do the best that you are capable of at that moment. That highest that is present to you, the summit available for the time and under the circumstances—that should be the source and inspiration of your act. Act on the heights where you stand and aspire for still higher heights.

Types of Meditation

THE first is to think on one subject in a continuous logical order. When, for example, you have to find the solution of a problem, you go step by step from one operation to another in a chain till you finally arrive at the conclusion. The thought is withdrawn from all other objects and is canalised along a single line. This is a kind of meditation, although it may not be usually known by that name. It marks a progress in the make-up of the human consciousness. For normally the mind moves at random, thoughts run about on many subjects, various, contrary and contradictory, from moment to moment. There is neither direction, consistency nor organisation: it is a confused mass of incomplete, inchoate thoughts. The control and organisation of this mass, to start with, in a limited sphere and in a definite direction, the rejection of the unnecessary and the irrelevant and the marshalling and ordering of the required elements form the first exercise towards mental growth. All high intelligence, all effective wielding of thought power needs this discipline. Under the present circumstances of the world the school-life gives the best opportunity for this development. This is a meditation that should be obligatory and universal.

The next type we may call concentration, instead of meditation. Here we do not pursue a thought-line, but fix the thought upon one object unmoved. It means a further process of withdrawing the consciousness from its habitual outgoing and dispersive movement. The thought is held at a point and attention is focussed upon it: it is continuous and unbroken attention, for example, upon an idea, a phrase (mantra) or an image. One can concentrate also upon a physical point, say, fixing the gaze upon the tip of one's nose, or on a lumi-

nous point outside etc. In this discipline the whole mind is gathered together and focussed: or, everything else is shut out leaving only one thing upon which all the light of the consciousness is directed. It is a standstill consciousness, like a flame erect and immobile in a windless place.

There is a third grade when the mind becomes a void, all thoughts being driven out, all vibrations tranquillised. It is a wide silence suffused with a still luminosity. The operation is difficult. For it means a kind of continuous and methodical drainage or rarefaction which takes more or less a very long time. First you throw out well-formed ideas and notions, processes and products of reasoning and judgment—the bigger waves, as it were; as soon as these subside you find there are smaller waves below or behind—half-formed thoughts, budding ideas, fugitive notions and so on; when these too are quieted down, you come across still another layer of smaller ripples of thought, close to sensations, nervous reactions, vibrations of the brain-mind, rudimentary precepts, etc., etc. One may go on like that if not *ad infinitum*, at least, to a considerable length. One arrives in the end at what is practically a vacuum, to all intents and purposes a silent mind. Even then it is a difficult and arduous process and may not be as absolute as one may expect. There are other surer and even perhaps easier processes to attain the same end. Thus instead of striving and struggling and forcing your will upon the restless waves, you simply relax yourself, bypass them as it were, await and aspire and open yourself towards the Silence that is above: call for the silence with trust and reliance and it comes not unoften as a massive inundation, a glacial sweep and automatically overwhelms you, drowning and filling you from top to toe. There is also another way: to contact, to enter into the Mother's Presence. Mother's Presence means all the realisations to which we aspire concretised, brought down, near to us, within our human reach. We have not to travel far and wide, mount to inaccessible heights, labour and strain—with blood and sweat and tears—to get what we want: all the gettings are ready-made there in our atmosphere, we have only to know and perceive, open something in us for them to flow in. That is perhaps the action of Grace: silence,

absolute silence, not only in the mind, but in the whole being, can come this way too.

The last process gives us the clue to the fourth type of meditation—the type, in fact, which is recommended for us, both because it is the easiest—following as it does the line of least resistance, also because it gives the fullness of the result demanded. Instead of trying to manipulate the mental force with one's personal will and effort, instead of seeking to control and command the consciousness, the best thing to do would be to remain quiet as far as it is normally possible for one without struggle and then turn the gaze to the other side, deep inward or high upward, become more conscious of the light, the Will that brought you to this Path, to be alive with the secret delight, the flaming aspiration that is there within you behind all the turbid turmoil of the surface life and consciousness. This Presence and Guidance will of itself place before you the elements and movements that are to be rejected and those that are to be accepted and given your sincere assent those that help you in doing the necessary gesture. Indeed, if you do not resist too much, it will throw out what is to be thrown out and bring in what is to be brought in. That is how the instrument will be cleansed and refined. Silence will be put in, for that is the basis; but not silence alone, for it will be unified with a new dynamism expressing the Divine's Will—personal choice there will be none, neither for absolute quietude nor for mere activity.

The Conscious Being

THE conscious being in us is truly the psychic being. But it is at present behind and out of the picture. What is normally conscious then is the mind, a part of it which has got the light is illumined. We are conscious through this portion, and even we identify ourselves with it, know and feel it as our self, as "I".

The mind, however, has a central consciousness which may be called the Witness Mind, the Purusha in the mind. It stands apart and observes whatever is happening in the mind and in other parts as well; it is in fact the observer of the whole *ādhāra*. The other parts are the vital and the physical. The vital too has its own central consciousness, its witness Purusha, which observes all the vital movements and also through its own angle the other parts. Likewise the physical has a Purusha and it too observes through its own consciousness. The mental Purusha says, "I see I am thinking, reasoning, etc."; the vital Purusha says, "I see I am angry, violent or enjoying, energising, etc."; the physical Purusha says, "I see I am acting, walking, running, etc." Now each of these three Purushas, in an ordinary person, stands separately, each is conscious in its own way; they are not clearly conscious of each other; they intermix, but not happily, they are more often than not at cross purposes. Very rarely are they unified and harmonised or bound together as a team for serving a common purpose, a single aim. That union and harmonisation can be done only through the supreme Purusha, the Divine Witness who is the true conscious Being, the one Purusha behind or above all the others, whose light first of all centralises in the psychic being and then through it is canalised into its delegates or emanations on the lower levels, the mind, the vital and the physical.

What is consciousness? It is the inverse of Inconscience. It is the creative essence of the universe: without consciousness there is no creation. Inconscience means non-existence. The supreme Non-manifest becomes conscious of itself, that is, objectifies itself, sees itself created or reflected in multiple centres: that is the origin of all creation. By consciousness all is, by unconsciousness nothing is. Consciousness is light, consciousness is life.

The original consciousness is one and indivisible and at its highest potential. But when it gets devolved and divided, i.e., individualised, it gets at the same time diffracted and minimised, like the reflections in a rough mirror. What we normally understand by consciousness is this diminished degree of it in the individual. But although diminished and diffracted in many forms and modes, the basic consciousness is still the divine consciousness which is there behind and at the origin of all the partial formulations. It is through this core of Divine Presence—which is nothing else than the psychic—that the individual maintains and develops its contact with the Divine, grows into the fullness of the divine consciousness even as an individual and earthly embodiment.

The Story of Creation

CONSCIOUSNESS is the source and basis of creation. Even the most material object, apparently unconscious, the stone, for example, has inherent in it a vibration of consciousness. Where there is absolutely no consciousness, it is the Inconscient. If you ever descend into the Inconscient, that is to say, further down the scale from the inanimate stone, you will know the difference. The gulf between the stone and the Inconscient is very much, very much indeed, greater than that between the stone and man. For it is a secret consciousness that links man to the stone, but beyond there is a hiatus, something unbridgeable. The Inconscient is the Void, the absolute zero ("Inane," Sri Aurobindo names it in *Savitri*): it is not substance, it is pure negation. Consciousness is at the back of the material universe: without that consciousness there would not be the marvellous organisation that is found within the material particle of atom. The Inconscient is pre-existent to the material creation.

The one indivisible Reality and its pure consciousness: that is the origin. This Supreme Consciousness chose to objectify himself, bring himself out of himself, witness himself in play—the Upanishad says, the One wished to have a second, a companion to himself, *sa dwitīyam aichhat*. This power of self-objectification is a free-will given to the consciousness to move out of its original unified status and move abroad and away, as it liked. Thus the Supreme saw himself as his own power of self-manifestation, and that is the Mother Consciousness, Adya Shakti, Aditi—consciousness-power, who again in her forward creative urge expressed herself in the first four major Emanations (Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati). But this free urge, free to separate itself and pro-

ceed in an independent movement of self-expression and evolution precipitated itself immediately, almost as a logical consequence of its career of free choice, into the Denial, the Negation that is inconscience. So, against the Supreme, the Divine Consciousness, there stood out the utter unconsciousness: the Light did appear into absolute Darkness. It was the result of a self-choice in the consciousness: but the end was the very opposite of consciousness.

It was a dead silence, more silent than Death and more dead than Silence itself. And it was utter helplessness and hopelessness. The Divine Consciousness—Aditi—saw the terrible line of destiny that freedom had taken and ended in: she could stand it no longer and a cry went out for succour, for help. And the answer came immediate, a ray shot down from the one Supreme Consciousness and entered into the womb of Inconscience. Lo, the miracle, Matter was born, the first creation, the first manifestation of the Supreme Grace. Matter holds in it the spark of consciousness that is to grow and unfold itself, shine more and more into the enveloping gloom of Inconscience, illumining it farther and farther, pushing its frontiers ever backward and away.

The birth of Matter coincided with another descent of the Supreme Consciousness; it is a descent in graded stages linking up the highest to the lowest through intermediate formations: they are telescoped into Matter so that Matter might lodge and express them gradually through its inherent developing consciousness till the highest is revealed and embodied here as it is always self-revealed at the highest.

In the graded descent, in the hierarchy of planes and levels, there appeared forces and beings also proper to each domain. The earliest, the first among them are the Asuras, rather the original Asuras—the first quaternary (some memory of them seemed to linger in the Greek legend of Chronos and his brood). For they embody the powers of division, of Inconscience: they are the Affirmations of the Negation. Against the Asuras there came and ranged—at the first line of division, on the one side of the descent of the Light—the first godheads, the major powers and personalities of the Divine Consciousness. The battle of the gods and Titans for the possession of the earth has been going on ever since. The end will come one

day: it will mean the dissolution of the forces of Negation, at least within the earthly sphere, and the establishment there of the reign of Light.

Earth a Symbol

THE earth is the centre of the material universe. It has been created for concentrating the force that is to transform Matter. It is the symbol of the divine potentiality in Matter. As we have said, the earth was created through a direct intervention of the Divine Consciousness: it is on the earth alone that there is and can be the direct contact with the Divine. The earth absorbs and develops and radiates the divine light; its radiation spreads through space and extends wherever there is Matter. The material universe shares, to some extent, the gift that the earth brings—the light and harmony of the Divine Consciousness. But it is upon the Earth alone that there is the full and final flowering of that consciousness.

The psychic being is found on the earth alone, for it is a product of the earth: it is the touch of the Divine upon Matter. The psychic being is a child of the Earth: it is born and grows upon Earth, it is native to nowhere else. Still when it develops sufficiently and becomes an adult individuality, it can go to other physical domains, visit other planets, for example.

Total Transformation Demands Total Rejection

To a positive side in the sadhana, there must also be a negative one. Realisation or experience, on one side, must be accompanied by rejection of things that oppose it, on the other. People wonder why a beautiful experience fades away too soon or does not repeat itself easily, why a happy condition does not continue long but is followed almost inevitably by a condition of despond.

The reason is very simple. The experience or realisation is not a total one, that is to say, it belongs to a part only of the nature and is not shared by other parts. The sadhak is not of one piece: the whole of his nature is not worked to the same pitch and amplitude, it is not equally responsive everywhere. Thus, when the psychic brings forward an experience and the inner consciousness is full of the light and energy and joy and faith, even then, in the background or by the side, if you are vigilant and observe carefully, you will see that the mind, the external mind, has its reservations or continues to move in its accustomed way. It looks askance at the experience, criticises or doubts; or it tries to understand or explain in its own terms, seize it within its frame of comprehension. Or else, the vital rises up and tries to get hold of the experience and utilise it for its own purposes; it is enjoyed as a tasty food, made to serve the vital's ambition or vanity, some lower ignorant egoistic urge. Or again, the physical, the body consciousness may not at all participate in the experience; it may remain indifferent, listless, lethargic with no impulse or enthusiasm to carry out in practice the experience of the inner consciousness. Any of these drags or cross-currents is sufficient to maim and diminish and even wipe out the experience: and usually all

the three are finally there to combine and reinforce each other's effects to do the mischief.

The remedy is to turn back and hold to the spot of light that is there in the consciousness, the clarity or the aspiration that belongs to the inner and higher being. That has to be used as a torch, as a staff to support and guide you in your periods of darkness and vacillation. That beam of burning light should be thrown, in turn, upon those parts in you that besiege with their obscurity and inconscience, doubt and arrogance, the realisation that comes, the progress on the way. It must be done with firmness, vigilance and perseverance. The mixture has to be sorted out, the dross separated, kept on one side and the pure element on the other: the impurities have to be put under the flame-light to melt, burn away and be eliminated. And this means an ardent sincerity, for that is the tinder which keeps the fire blazing.

And sincerity demands often a severe dealing with oneself; it involves accepting an inconvenience, inflicting even a painful pressure. One has to be prepared for such a turn, one has to welcome it even at times. The part that is unwilling or refractory has to feel the wrench, if it is to be cleansed and corrected.

Indeed, the experience of joy in the very process of suffering is a common experience with the saint and the martyr. We know of innumerable instances where the fierce torture of the flesh was drowned, overwhelmed in the ecstasy of the inner aspiration; the vital enthusiasm drawn from the inner flame suffuses, courses through the nerves and tissues with such energy and impetus that it effectively blocks out the invading reaction of pain. It is a discipline that has its value even for the sadhak of the sunlit path.

The Individual and the Collective

AN integral sadhana cannot be confined to the individual alone; an element of collectivity must enter into it. An individual is not an isolated being in any way. There are, of course, schools of Yoga and philosophy that seek to isolate the individual, consider him as an entity hemmed in by his own consciousness; indeed they view the individuals as all distinct and separate, each a closed circle or sphere, they may barely touch each other but never interpenetrate or intercommunicate. Each stands as a solitary island, all together forming the vast archipelago of the universe. This is a position, no doubt, that can be acquired by a kind of discipline of the consciousness, though not to a great perfection; but it is not a natural or necessary poise. Normally, individuals do merge into each other and form one web of give and take. A desire, an impulse, even a thought that rises in you, goes out of you, overflows you and spreads around even to the extreme limit of the earth, like a Hertzian wave. Again, any movement in any person anywhere in the world would come to you, penetrate you, raise a similar vibration in you, even though you may not so recognise it but consider it as something exclusively personal to you. You send out vibrations into the world and the world sends out vibrations into you. Individual life is the meeting-ground of these outgoing and incoming forces. It is precisely to avoid this circle or cycle of world-vibrations that the older Yogis used to *leave the world*, away from society, retire to mountain-tops, into the virgin forest where they hoped to find themselves alone and aloof, to be single with the Single Self. This is a way out, but it is not the only or the best solution. It is not the best solution, for although apparently one is alone on the hill-top, in the desert crypt, or the

forest womb, one always carries with oneself a whole world within, the normal nature with all its instincts and impulses, reactions, memories and hopes: you cut away the outside, run away from it, but what about the outside that is within you? The taste for a tasty thing does not drop with the removal of the object. Secondly, such an individual solution, even if it were possible, would still be a purely personal matter and, in the ultimate analysis, egoistic. It is why the Buddha refused to enter definitely into Nirvana and withdrew from the brink to work among men. Indeed, the real solution is elsewhere. It is not to withdraw or go away but to find within the orbit here a centre, a focus of consciousness which is not controlled by the outside forces but can control them, which is not coloured by them but can lend them its own luminosity. That is the soul or the psychic centre.

And this centre is not an isolated entity in its nature: it is, as it were, a universal centre, that is to say, it links itself indissolubly in a secret sense of identity with all other centres. For this self is only one of the selves through which the One Self has multiplied itself for a varied self-objectification. The light that shines here, the fire that burns here and the delight that flows here illumine, purify and revitalise not only the individual in which it dwells, but move abroad and extend into the other individuals with which it lives in spiritual identity.

How to Wait

"If you know how to wait, you gain time". Usually, when you are about to do a thing, the impulse is to rush towards it and rush it through; between the idea and the execution you do not want to leave any gap. You are in a haste to see the thing done. You do not care to pause and look about you, view and weigh the conditions and circumstances, think out the best way of working towards the goal. The result of the hustle is failure, very often dead failure. You have to begin over again. You may even have to begin over and over again if you do not learn the lesson given. Evidently, you lose time, lose energy and lose your success. On the contrary, what you have to do before you actually take up your work is not to jump at it, but understand what it means and involves, have before your mind's eye a clear figure or pattern of the thing to be undertaken, not to go upon a vague and indefinite notion about it, something that will take shape—that will take care of itself—as you proceed. You must have a clear conception of your work and also you must find out the exact ways and means, have at your elbow the best possible implements. It is only when you are fully armed with the necessary equipment that you can be sure of success without any waste of time or energy.

And then there is a time, a propitious time for everything. A thing cannot be done at any time, it has its own appointed hour; you cannot succeed even if you attempt a hundred times before that hour strikes. But when the time is ripe, how easily a thing seems to get done! In what does this ripeness of time consist, what are the marks of the propitious hour? It is when you are in complete possession of the right instruments and when the disposition of circumstances is such that they

concur to help and execute and not mar and obstruct. But how to find out or recognise when such conditions are available? Not by your mind or external reasoning. You must have the intuition, and instinctive perception of the situation. Always the indication is there in the very poise of your consciousness. That is to say, when it is filled with a great calm, trust and confidence, a luminous concentration.

Fatigue and Work

FATIGUE, it is said, comes from overwork. The cure for fatigue is therefore rest, that is, do-nothing. But the truth of the matter is that most often fatigue is due not to too much work, but rather too little work, in other words, laziness or boredom. In fact, fatigue need not come too soon or too easily, provided one knows how to set about his work. If you are interested in your work, you can continue for a very long time without fatigue; and precisely one of the means of recovering from fatigue is not to sit down and slip into lethargy and *tamas*, but to take up a work that rouses your interest. Work done in joy and quiet enthusiasm is tonic: it is dynamic rest. A work done without interest, as a sort of duty or task, will naturally tire you soon. The remedy therefore against fatigue is to keep the interest awake. Now, there is a further mystery. Interest does not depend upon the work: any work can be made interesting and interesting to a supreme degree. There is no work which is by itself dull, insipid, uninteresting. All depends upon the value you yourself put upon it; you can choose to make it as attractive as a romance, as significant as a symbol.

How to do it? How to find interest in any thing or all things? Is there not a work that conforms to your nature, adapted to your character and capacity? And are there not works that are against the grain with you that lie outside your scope and province?

The question is not about your scope and capacity. All depends upon your attitude, the consciousness with which you approach a work, especially when you are a *sadhak*. When a work comes to you or when you have to do a work, you must take it up as a thing worth doing. Whatever the value given to it normally or you often put upon it, you should not neglect

or merely tolerate it, but welcome it and set about it with the utmost conscientiousness possible. Even if it were a trifling insignificant thing, a menial affair, for example, do not consider it as mean or beneath your dignity. Directly you begin to do a thing in the right spirit, you will find it becoming miraculously interesting. Try to bring perfection even in that bit of insignificance. Do it with a goodwill, even if it is scrubbing the floor, telling yourself: "I must do it as best I can, that is to say, this too I shall do even better than a servant, I shall make the floor look really neat and clean and beautiful." That is the crux of the matter. You should try to bring out the best in you and put it into your work. In other words, the work becomes an instrument of progress. The goodwill, attention, concentration, self-forgetfulness and the control over yourself, over your organs and nerves—the "smaller" the work the more detailed is the control gained—all which are involved in doing a work perfectly, with as much perfection as it is possible for you to command, are elements called forth in you and help to make you a better man. Indeed a work for which you have no preferential bias, to which you are not emotionally attached, even indifferent normally, may be of especial help, for you will be able to do it with less nervous disturbance, with a large amount of detachment and disinterestedness.

Man usually chooses his work or is made to choose a work because of a vital preference, a prejudice or notion that it is the kind in which he can shine or succeed. This egoistic vanity or opportunism may be necessary or unavoidable in ordinary life; but when one wishes to go beyond the ordinary life and aspires for the true life, this attachment or personal choice is more an impediment than a help to progress, towards finding the way to the true life. The Yogic attitude to work therefore is that of absolute detachment, not to have any choice, but to accept and do whatever is given to you, whatever comes to you in your normal course of life and do it with the utmost perfection possible. It is in that way and that way alone that all work becomes supremely interesting, and all life a miracle of delight.

This does not mean, however, that there is no work natural to you, for which you have a special aptitude, in and through

which your soul, the Divine, can express itself fully and wholly in a special manner. But what is that work? The *kartavyam karma*—the work that demands to be done—deriving from your *swadharma*—your self-nature? Evidently, it is not that of your superficial nature, which the mind chooses, the vital prefers and the body finds convenient. To come by your true or soul work, you have to pass through a considerable discipline, a rigorous training.

You cannot throw off this work and that at random declaring they are not the work fit for you or jump at anything that your fancy favours. Indeed, you cannot give up anything, cast out anything, simply because it is unpleasant or not sufficiently pleasant. The more violently you try to shake off a thing, the more it will try to stick to you. Instead of that, you must know how to let a thing drop of itself, quietly, automatically and definitively. That is the only way of getting rid of an unwanted or an unnecessary thing. Before all, be sincere to yourself: that is to say, try to follow the highest light and aspiration in you each moment, and be faithful to that and that alone. Never allow yourself to be shaken or moved by the likes and dislikes of your mind or heart or body. Do even what goes against the grain of your body or heart or mind, if it is presented to you as the thing to be done; do it as calmly, dispassionately and as perfectly as it is possible for you to do and leave the rest to your higher destiny. If you belong all to your soul, if you are obedient to the Divine alone, then as this consciousness and poise grow clearer and steadier in you, you will find things that are not consonant with it dropping off from you quietly and without any effort or reaction from you, like autumn leaves from branches that supply the sap no more. Your work is changed, your circumstances are changed, your relation with things and persons are changed automatically and inevitably in accordance with the need and demand of your soul-consciousness.

The Steps of the Soul

THE human individual is a very complex being: he is composed of innumerable elements, each one of which is an independent entity and has almost a personality. Not only so, the most contradictory elements are housed together. If there is a particular quality or capacity present, the very opposite of it, annulling it, as it were, will be also found along with it and embracing it. I have seen a man brave, courageous, heroic to the extreme, flinching from no danger, facing unperturbed the utmost peril, the bravest of the brave, truly; and yet I have seen the same man cowering in abject terror, like the last of poltroons, in the presence of certain circumstances. I have seen a most generous man, giving away largely, freely, not counting any expenditure or sacrifice, without the least care or reservation; the same person I have also found to be the vilest of misers in respect of certain other considerations. I have seen again the most intelligent person, with a clear mind, full of light and understanding, easily comprehending the logic and implication of a topic and yet I have seen him betraying the utmost stupidity of which even an ordinary man without education or intelligence would be incapable. These are not theoretical examples, but I have come across such persons actually in life.

The complexity arises not only in extension, but also in depth. Man does not live on a single plane but on many planes at the same time. There is a scale of gradation in human consciousness: the higher one rises in the scale the greater the number of elements or personalities that one possesses. Whether one lives mostly or mainly on the physical or vital or mental plane or on any particular section of these planes or on planes above and beyond, there will be accord-

ingly differences in the constitution or psycho-physical make-up of the individual personality. The higher one stands the richer the personality, because it lives not only on its own normal level, but also on all that are below and which it has transcended. The complete or integral man, some occultists say, possesses 365 personalities; indeed it may be much more. (The Vedas speak of the three and thirty-three and thirty-three hundred and thirty-three thousand gods that may be housed in the human vehicle—the basic three being evidently the triple status or world of Body, Life and Mind).

What is the meaning of this self-contradiction, this division in man? To understand that we must know and remember that each person represents a certain quality or capacity, a particular achievement to be embodied. How best can it be done? What is the way by which one can acquire a quality at its purest, and highest and most perfect? It is by setting an opposition to it. That is how a power is increased and strengthened—by fighting against and overcoming all that weakens and contradicts it. The deficiencies in respect of a particular quality show you where you are to mend and reinforce and in what way to improve in order to make it perfectly perfect. It is the hammer that beats the weak and soft iron to transform it into hard steel. The preliminary discord is useful and necessary to be utilised for a higher harmony. This is the secret of self-conflict in man. You are weakest precisely in that element which is destined to be your greatest asset.

Each man has then a mission to fulfil, a rôle to play in the universe; a part he has been given to learn and take up in the cosmic Purpose which he alone is capable of executing and none other. This he has to learn and acquire through life-experiences, that is to say, not in one life, but in life after life. In fact, that is the meaning of the chain of lives that the individual has to pass through, namely, to acquire experiences and to gather out of them the thread—the skein of qualities and attributes, powers and capacities—for the pattern of life he has to weave. Now, the inmost being, the true personality, the central consciousness of the evolving individual is his psychic being. It is, as it were, a very tiny speck of light lying far behind the experiences in normal people. In grown

up souls this psychic consciousness has an increased light—increased in intensity, volume and richness. Thus there are souls, old and new. Old and ancient are those that have reached or are about to reach the fullness of perfection; they have passed through a long past of innumerable lives and developed the most complex and yet the most integrated personality. New souls are those that are just emerged or emerging out of the mere physico-vital existence; these are like simple organisms, made of fewer constituents, referring mostly to the bodily life, with just a modicum of the mental. It is the soul, however, that grows with experiences and it is the soul that builds and enriches the personality. Whatever portion of the outer life, whatever element in the mind or vital or body succeeds in coming in contact with the psychic consciousness, that is to say, is able to come under its influence, is taken up and lodged there: it remains in the psychic being as its living memory and permanent possession. It is such elements that form the basis, the groundwork upon which the structure of the integral and true personality is raised.

The first thing then to do is to find out what it is that you are meant to realise, what is the rôle you have to play, your particular mission and the capacity or quality you have to express. You have to discover that and also the thing or things that oppose and do not allow it to flower or come to full manifestation. In other words, you have to know yourself, recognize your soul or psychic being.

For that you must be absolutely sincere and impartial. You must observe yourself as if you were observing and criticising a third person. You must not start with an idea that this is your life's mission, such is your particular capacity, you are to do this or you are to do that, in this lies your talent or genius etc. That will carry you away from the right track. It is not the liking or disliking of your external being, your mental or vital or physical choice that determines the true line of your growth. Nor should you take up the opposite attitude and say, "I am good for nothing in this matter, I am useless in that other, this is not for me." Neither vanity or arrogance nor self-depreciation or false modesty should move you. As I said, you must be absolutely impartial and un-

concerned. You should be like a mirror that reflects the truth and does not judge.

If you are able to keep such an attitude, if you have this repose and quiet trust in your being and wait for what may be revealed to you, then something like this happens: you are, as it were, in the woods, dark and noiseless; you see in front of you just a sheet of water dark and still, hardly visible—a bit of a pond imbedded in the obscurity, and slowly upon it a moonbeam is cast and in the cool dim light emerges the calm liquid surface. That is how your secret truth of being will appear and present itself to you at your first contact with it: there you will see gradually reflected the true qualities of your being, the traits of your divine personality, what you really are and what you are meant to be.

One who has thus known oneself and possessed oneself conquering all opposition within himself, has by that very fact extended himself and his conquest, making it easier for others to make the same or similar conquest. These are the pioneers or the élite who by their victorious campaign within themselves help others towards their victory.

The Expanding Body-Consciousness

THE field of our physical activity is very limited. If you look at it closely you will find it indeed extremely narrow and our capacities confined within a small circle. We are bound by the outline of our material body. I cannot, for instance, be sitting in my room and at the same time doing gymnastics in the playground. If you wish to do one thing you cannot do another; if you are at one place you cannot be at another simultaneously. How convenient it would be if while I was writing at the table, I could get there immediately a book from a far-off shelf for consultation without moving or taking anybody's help! And yet is the thing so very impossible? We know, for example, of extraordinary—at least, queer—things happening at what are called “spirit *séances*”, things that cannot be explained by the normal functioning of the physical senses; they are explained as interventions from the spirit world. In reality, however, spirits or ghosts have, in general, very little to do in this matter. It is action not of disembodied beings but of the normal human energies—especially the vital or life energy—freed from the body's control and exerting itself independently. An example, a true fact that happened, will best illustrate what I mean to say.

A young man, in Paris, a clerk at a railway station, used to receive there his *fiancée* and her mother from time to time. One day he was expecting them and waiting for the train time; they had to come by train. As he was busy with his work at the table, at about the appointed hour, people around saw him all on a sudden bending down his head with a loud scream and then resting it on the table; he lay unconscious. In the meantime, what happened on the other side was a terrible railway disaster: the two women were involved in it.

The trains were smashed and all the passengers killed or mortally wounded. But, curious to say, the young woman, the *fiancée*, was found, living and almost unscathed, in the midst of the debris, within a sort of cover made by a fallen beam that lay across over her. She was pulled out with only a few bruises upon her body. Here is, however, the young man's version of the story. He said that as he was working at the table, suddenly he heard the voice of his *fiancée* calling loudly for help and he saw in a flash, as it were, the situation she was in, he rushed out, not physically indeed, and ran and threw himself over the body of his *fiancée* to protect her; that is the only thing he could do. As a result he did in fact protect her. True, he did not rush out in his body, for that matter, if he had done, it would have been of no use. What rushed out of him was his vital body, a formation of that life energy which is most close to the body and almost as concrete as physical energy but much more powerful and effective. This vital power concentrated and projected out of him acted as a veritable shield over the woman. The young man himself, curious to say, bore marks of bruises upon his head as if a huge load had fallen upon it. A strong impact upon the vital can and does leave scars upon the material body: it is not an uncommon phenomenon. Many of the Christian saints (Saint Francis of Assisi, for example) are reported to have borne on their body the marks—the stigmata—of crucifixion of Christ's body; Ramakrishna, too, it is said, once showed marks of scourging on his back when a boy was whipped in his presence.

All this means that the physical body is not man's sole means of action in the physical world. The physical extends and expands into more and more subtle modes of activity and all the more, not less, effective for that very reason. Behind the physical lies the subtle physical, behind which again is the vital physical and then the various grades of the vital. Indeed the vital or life energy as a whole is the real dynamism of all our physical activities and if it usually acts through its bodily instruments, it can act independently of them too; normally, too, it often acts in this way, only we are not conscious or observant enough to notice. A conscious concentration of the vital energy directed upon a material object can

handle it with the effectivity of material energy. When it needs physical conditions it creates them, as the protective vital energy of the young man created the physical disposition of objects that formed a covert for the girl.

In the present case, the phenomenon happened automatically without any premeditation on the part of the persons concerned; because the sympathy between the two was so strong, other considerations did not weigh in the balance against it. Needless to say, if one wishes to obtain conscious mastery of this occult power, one will have to go through a long and arduous discipline. But, if difficult, the thing is not impossible. In the matter of physical feats, for example, a particular development may seem for the moment beyond your reach; but with practice and perseverance, stubborn will and wise guidance, you can not only arrive at your immediate end but do much more. The story of many who have broken Olympic records is revealing in this respect. In the same way, one can master the subtle forces, if one goes about the thing earnestly and in the right way. It is more difficult—much more perhaps—but the way is there provided the will is there.

Body, the Occult Agent

THE body has an individuality of its own. It is an organised formation and acts as a whole in each and all its parts. The human body is, *par excellence*, such a formation; for it is moved and controlled by the consciousness which overshadows or informs it, which is its master, whose will it executes scrupulously.

The body is an epitome of the world. It encases within its frame the whole world, particularly the earth—earth itself being an epitome of the world—on a miniature scale, the *mikros* reproducing all the features and characters of the *makros*.

Such being the case, a wholly conscious body governed and inspired by the supreme Consciousness lives and moves in the cosmic rhythm: not only does it register in itself the world happenings, but also possesses an active power to control and even to change those happenings by its individual movement. We may imagine the body to be a kind of map or chart of the earth. Each spot on the earth is represented by a particular spot—a certain group of cells, for example—in the body. If the consciousness ruling the body concentrates itself upon that point and induces a change there, a corresponding change can be brought about automatically on a larger scale in the part and conditions of the earth with which it is connected. Thus without going out and moving about, without being the “man on the spot” to know things “at first hand”, one can, sitting, in one’s room, by switching on a key, as it were, in one corner of the body, set in movement a whole process of happenings in a particular region of the earth. By a conscious re-disposition of a few cells in your body, you can bring about a desired change in world circumstances. The body is thus a

control room for the consciousness in respect of happenings upon earth. Naturally, any body cannot do that, but only a body destined and trained for that purpose.

A body, in this way, becomes the instrument, a lever for producing mighty changes and creations upon earth. This conception of the occult potency of the body is at the basis of the rite or institution of sacrifice that was a characteristic feature of the old-world society. Iphigenia was offered as a victim to avert the wrath of the gods and bring victory to the Greeks. Sometimes an animal replaced the human victim and served the same purpose and in the same way. And in a higher sense—indeed in the highest sense—a body can sacrifice itself in such a way—wholly and integrally—as to bring about a corresponding integral reversal or revaluation in the physical world. A human being that makes of himself a holocaust—burns himself out at the altar of the Divine—keeping nothing for his own sake, living for the Divine alone, by calling down the divine will in himself, brings into the earthly life too a divine presence and transformation. A total physical sacrifice results inevitably into a total expression and embodiment of the Divine in the Physical world.

The Integral Realisation

ENDLESS are the ways to the Divine. Each one followed with sincerity and earnestness and persistence to the end leads to the same goal. Now, if the end were solely to reach the highest summit, the point beyond, the transcendent God and settle there, any one line would be quite sufficient for the purpose. And even if several or all were tried, as Ramakrishna did, that would be only to prove the fact and to encourage each and everyone to pursue his own path and not get discouraged if others did not subscribe to it or even denied it. At the most it would be a richer experience in the sense that the same truth is tasted and enjoyed in various ways.

But such is not the character of the supramental or Integral Yoga. This Yoga does not aim at kicking the ladder of existence down once you are up beyond. It seeks to integrate the Beyond and the Here-Below, make of the mundane an expression and embodiment of the Spirit. In this view the approaches to the Divine are not mere interim truths but facets of one organic total reality incarnating the divine consciousness in a divine life.

In other ways that lead to an escape, you reach a state where you are happy and satisfied, you feel you have attained the highest, the utmost worth attaining and you need not move further or look for anything else. The integral yogi is not so bound by one experience. He will find himself always getting away from the already attained status, however high it may be, and ranging beyond. Even if he tries to repeat an experience which he cherishes and considers worth repeating and so goes through the usual steps to recover it, he may find that instead of the experience wanted he is given quite a new experience.

The problem for him is not to reject or minimise any experience or stick to some only as valuable but embrace all and to put them together, make a synthesis out of them. This synthesis is the very character of the Integral Yoga. And it can be reached only by rising beyond the experiences given for synthesis. A higher poise of consciousness only can find the point of union among different elements and the function and rôle of each one in a composite harmony. The supramental status is the highest synthetic centre; here all experiences and realisations rise into their original and true reality and find their perfect expression.

Ever Green!

WHEN you have an inner experience, there is a natural tendency in you to have it again, to repeat it, and to repeat it, you go by the same way and in the same manner. When you sit in meditation, for example, you withdraw yourself from outward contacts and enter into a condition with which you have become familiar, which has pleased you and which you consider sufficiently high and a commendable poise of consciousness. Thus whenever you sit down for meditation, you forthwith get into your habitual condition automatically, without any effort and you remain there as long as you like. Evidently, the experience has become a matter of habit i.e. mechanical and lifeless, but you do not perceive it, you have become so unconscious. That means you do not progress any more, you have shut yourself, as it were, in a closed box. If you continue, you may do so your whole life in that way, but you will not have advanced a single step; on the contrary, you will have regressed a good deal.

The great secret of progress—and also of permanent youthfulness—is to feel at every moment that you are just beginning your life and your life experience. Always you start afresh; even if you are on the same path and seem to be moving in the same direction for the hundredth time, you must feel as if it was for the first time that you undertook the journey, it was your maiden attempt towards a new discovery. Forget all past ideas, notions, experiences that crowd upon your mind; sweep away all the accumulated dust that has cumbered your brain; make your consciousness as clean and clear as that of a newborn babe—all straightened out, with none of the convolutions and wrinkles of an aged cerebrum. Always you will come into contact with the world and things in all

the simplicity and spontaneity of a pure consciousness and always the world and things will bring to you their unending wonder and beauty and truth.

Whenever you go inside and seek your poise, do not look for your old acquaintances, the familiar experiences, do not carry upon your back the load of the past, but go ahead, as if through a virgin tract, making quite new discoveries and opening unexpected vistas at each step. You can make an experiment even on your physical body, i.e. take the physical consciousness too to share in your adventure of ever new discovery. Thus you may, for example, forget your habit of eating or even walking, truly forget and try to learn over again, even as you did for the first time as a child. You have to acquire consciously a capacity of the body that has become an almost unconscious reflex action. It is a wonderful and exhilarating experience. Naturally you cannot repeat too often or carry too far an experiment of this kind on the physical plane. But you can freely deal with your inner life and consciousness. You can make your mind and your vital a clean slate, as much as you like: not once in your life, but every moment of your life. And then see how the world impinges upon your consciousness, what fresh discoveries and awakenings come to you endlessly! You can always rid yourself of the accustomed vibrations on the normal levels of your existence, the physical, vital and mental; and even you can go beyond your psychic formation and be the wide, the vast, the limitless, the Infinite itself, void of all name and form. And then with that virgin consciousness drop straight into the world of material life and form, into your body and bodily reactions. The world will give itself up to you in its pristine purity, its original beauty and truth, always luminous and glorious. This experience has to be the normal mode of your living, not simply the culmination or acme of your being, a fixed and stagnant status, even if considered the highest, the *summum bonum*. That is how you can keep yourself and the world around you ever fresh and young and new.

The preacher who speaks of the truth and delivers it to his hearers is usually effective for the first time or for a first few occasions only, when he feels the truth of his truth and is sincere while delivering. But as time wears on, his truth too

wears out, for it becomes stereotyped, a matter of mere habit. The experience is no longer lived, but mechanically doled out. You are sincere only when the experience is new and fresh and living, it should be made so every moment, otherwise it is dead letter, letter that killeth.

That is the secret of spiritual life and even of normal life. To keep it ever green you must know how to pour into it a continuous flow of new sap. Look upon yourself, look upon the world always with fresh eyes—never burdened or obscured by the scales that past experiences and acquisitions have collected. Unlearn the past, always begin from the beginning as a beginner—every moment a fresh impact, a new revelation, an unexpected opening. That is how life remains ever young and ever progressive.

A Page of Occult History

At the beginning of creation, four individual formations—the first personalities—made their appearance. There were: (1) a Being of Light or Consciousness, (2) a Being of Truth or Reality, (3) a Being of Love or Ananda and (4) a Being of Life. And the first law of creation was freedom of decision. These Beings were manifestations in the free movement of the Divine; they themselves moved free, according to their individualised conscious will. They stood out, as if in bold relief, on the background of the Divine Existence. For originally, although they differentiated themselves from each other and from the Divine, yet they formed a unified harmony and lived and moved and had their being as different members of the same divine Body. At first they stood out, but still essentially and apparently linked on to their fount and origin. Soon, however, they stood out no longer on the Divine, but moved out of him, away and separate; they sought to fulfil their individualised will and destiny. The Divine did not impose its will or force these individualities to turn round: that would frustrate the very purpose of creation. He allowed these independent beings to enjoy their full independence, although they were born out of him and essential part and parcel of his own being. They went abroad on a journey of adventure, each carving out its own line of growth and fulfilment. The first fruit, the inevitable reaction of freedom was precisely, as is just said, a separation from the Divine, each one encircled within its ego, limited and bound to its own fund of potency: individualism means limitation. Now, once separated, the connection with the source snapped, that is to say in the outward activity, in dynamic movement or becoming (not in essential being), the Four Independents lapsed

into their opposites: Light changed to Darkness, i.e. consciousness to unconsciousness, Truth changed to Falsehood, Delight changed to Pain and Suffering, and Life changed to Death. That is how the four undivine principles, the Powers of the Undivine came to rule and fashion the material creation.

Into the heart of this Darkness and Falsehood and Pain and Death, a seed was sown, a grain that is to be the epitome and symbol of material creation and in and through which the Divine will claim back all the elements gone astray, the prodigal ones who will return to recognise and fulfil the Divine. That was Earth. And the earth, in her turn, in her labour towards the Divine Fulfilment, out of her bosom, threw up a being who would again symbolise and epitomise the earth and material creation. That is Man. For, man came with the soul in him, the Psychic Being, the Divine Flame, the spark of consciousness in the midst of universal unconsciousness, a miniature of the original Divine Light-Truth-Love-Life. In the meantime, to help the evolution, to join hands with the aspiring soul in the human being, there was created, on the defection of the First Lords—the Asuric Quaternity—a second hierarchy of luminous beings—Devas, gods. (Something of this inner history of the world is reflected in the Greek legend of struggle between the Titans and the Olympians.) These gods, however, being a latter creation, perhaps because they were young and inexperienced, could not cope immediately with their strong Elders. It is why we see in the mythological legends the gods very often worsted at the hands of the Asuras: Indra hiding under the sea, Zeus threatened often with defeat and disaster. It is only an intervention from the Supreme (the Greeks called it Fate) that saved them in the end and restored the balance.

However, the Asuras came to think better of the game and consented to use their freedom on the side of the Divine, for the fulfilment of the Divine; that is to say, they agreed to conversion. Thus they took birth as or in human beings, so that they may be in contact with the human soul—Psyche—which is the only door or passage to the Divine in this material world. But the matter was not easy; the process was not straight. For, even agreeing to be converted, even basking in the sunshine of the human psyche, these incorrigible Elders

could not forget or wholly give up their old habit and nature. They now wanted to work for the Divine Fulfilment in order to magnify themselves thereby; they consented to serve the Divine in order to make the Divine serve them, utilise the Divine End for their own purposes. They wished to see the new creation after their own heart's desire.

That is how things have become difficult upon earth and are delaying the ultimate consummation which, however, is sure to come about when the wheel of Time or Fate has turned full circle.

Directed Change

NEVER to be bound by the experiences of the past, never to try to recover and stick to the knowledge or realisation gained, even though it may appear particularly precious or unique. This is a motto you should always keep before your mind. When you try to repeat what you have once said, done or experienced, you are sure to find very soon that the thing is becoming more and more lifeless, mechanical, a matter of routine and therefore perfectly useless. The soul has disappeared, the skeleton remains. You must live the word you utter at the time of uttering it, you must live the experience that you wish to recall or express. It is only thus that truth becomes living, possesses its force and light and gains its full value.

In point of fact, however, no two succeeding moments, whether in your consciousness or in the world movement, are exactly the same. Even if you try seriously and sincerely, you can never recapture a thing of the past as it was or as it came to you, not, that is to say, in the same exact manner. For you are no longer the same nor is the world. The world is a continuous flow, it has been very often declared: but it is not a continual repetition or recurrence, a mere cyclic order. On the other hand, constant renewal is the very character of the change. At every moment something new is coming down on the scene, something that was not surges out: Nature is bringing out at every step something that was hidden or latent in her secret depth, something is dropped from above into her normal movement, something unforeseen and unexpected. The march of time means evolution, that is to say, the addition of a new factor to the existing factors, making manifest something that was unmanifest—*mṛtam kañcana bodhayanti*, as the

Vedic Rishi says. Even if to an apparent sight everything seems to remain the same, yet it is not so in reality; always a new element is being poured into the existing circumstances, always an additional spark or influence enters into actual play of forces. It is the accumulated pressure of all the variables that brings about the great changes upon earth and in humanity which are summed up in the word evolution—changes cosmological and psychological.

You have to accept this principle of change and move on—to be one with the cosmic spirit,—never to stand still or turn back, but look forward and forge ahead. To be stagnant means to die and be fossilised. Now, if things change continually, it means things can change and must be changed. Only, one must see to the direction in which the change occurs. A change can be, after all, for better or for worse. And you have the power, if you are conscious with the right consciousness, to direct the change and even to initiate one of the right order. Have you ever climbed a hill? There are many ways, paths, issues leading towards the top, some more or less direct, some zigzag, others winding or taking a long round. This does not matter, provided you look upward, have the sense of direction to the summit, then you mount up. Otherwise if you have your face downward or look below, you move downward away from the top. In the same way changes that happen will be directed according to the direction of your look. And there is only one direction towards which you must turn your look: towards the summit, towards the highest goal. It is to grow conscious, to grow more and more conscious—to be conscious of yourself, to be conscious of the universe and to be conscious of the Divine who dwells in you and permeates the world and then to manifest the Divine, in your physical life and in the physical life of the world.

Value of Gymnastics *—Mental or Other*

INTELLECTUAL activity is a kind of gymnastics. What is the value of physical gymnastics? It develops the muscles, makes them strong, supple and agile. But simply to develop them, to make them grow as much as possible or to take delight in a mere muscle-bound body is not the ideal; it rather frustrates the very object of gymnastics. The object is to develop, strengthen, shape all the limbs of the body and organise and harmonise them into a beautiful and capable whole. A particular exercise is not to be indulged in for its own sake: all the energy of the body turned to that alone and the whole attention devoted to that one thing. An exclusive concentration upon a single physical feat does not bring out the full capacity of the body. It is to that end, the fullness of the body potential, that the culture of the bodily limbs is to be directed. In the same way, mental culture—the power of thinking, reasoning, arguing—has its value in its relation to the total culture of the mind and consciousness. There are higher regions of consciousness beyond the reach of the intellect; and you have to stop all intellectual activity, make your mind a total blank before you can hope to reach there. And indulgence even in so-called higher or philosophical speculations can only block the way to the true consciousness and knowledge. And yet you cannot leave the intellectual faculties uncared for or undeveloped on the plea that something higher is needed. In the physical body it need not be your ideal to become a “muscle man”; but neither would you like to have frail, ill-grown, rickety limbs that are weak and unshapely. With regard to your mental body too it would not serve any purpose to have a mind or intellect that is unable to think powerfully, cogently, closely.

It is harmful when you take to mental gymnastics only for its own sake, to exclusive intellectual acrobatics—discussions, disputations, verbal quibbles, etc., etc.; in that case the result attained is a disproportionate growth. But the development of the mind, even of the logical mind, can be and must be made part of the integral development, it must attain its true form, stature and strength, as a help towards and finally as an expression in its own field of the divinity, the highest and richest consciousness in man, even as the body too is to express and make concrete the supreme beauty and vigour of the perfect being.

Mental Silence

NORMALLY the mind is in a turmoil; it is eagerly active. First of all it is preoccupied with its problems and wants their solution. It knows only to think, to see pros and cons, weigh, reason, deduce; it arrives at some kind of conclusion which brings success or failure almost at random. Apart from this conscious or voluntary activity there is in the mind a whole region of involuntary activity; that is to say, it is assailed on all sides by a hundred thoughts, ideas and notions that come from outside and fill your brain cavity and over which you have no control. Each one tries to push forward, secure a place for itself, claim satisfaction and fulfilment. They are all moving at cross purposes and the mind knows no peace or issue.

It is possible to put a violent pressure upon oneself and forcibly push out all this confused movement and make the mind vacant. But the effect of mental will upon mind cannot be perfect or enduring. Besides it is not that, the absolute vacancy, that is our goal. Some other way and manner has to be found for stilling the mind's activities.

It is to call in the peace that is beyond, that is already there somewhere. It happens, with a sincere demand or aspiration in the consciousness, a certain readiness in the being. When that happens (something in the manner of the Upanishadic *vivṛṇute tanum svām*—he unveils himself his own body), you feel as if a sheer blank, even a black void has entered into you and captured you. In the very midst of whirlwind activity comes a dead stop. Nothing is there now, no idea, no thought, no notion, no motion even—an immense emptiness has eaten up, engulfed everything. Keep steady and await. In that stillness something rises up—up and up—and goes out beyond,

a tranquil beam of consciousness. And then something descends, from afar—a peace, a luminousness, authentic and absolute in its reality. It comes down, enters into you, possesses your brain and body. It has, you find, resolved all problems, harmonised all contraries and conflicts; for it comes from the home of mother truth. Now you do not strive, but you know, you do not grope, for you are led. You await and at each moment you receive the direction as to what is to be done; you have no thought or preoccupation, the inspired movement happens automatically and infallibly.

Sometimes it happens, too, that the sudden silence or inner immobility causes a bewilderment and you are seized by a fear that you are losing all bearings, that you are turning into an absolute idiot or something worse. Some in a panic have let go the grace that came. In such a condition one has to be firm and steady and continue.

I have said normally you are assailed by all kinds of thought. They come into your brain from all quarters and demand audience and satisfaction. Thoughts need come into the brain, because actions become possible through them, they give the form and frame to your action. But the difficulty is that the thoughts are not only various but almost always contrary to each other; we see man so often moving in contrary directions and contradicting himself at each step. It is bound to be so if the doors of the mind are left wide open. Sometimes, however, or in some persons, one dominant thought takes possession of the mind and drives out all others. In such a case, when a single idea rules, one is likely to cut oneself down, narrow oneself and force the being into a strait-jacket, to move in a closed groove. The being in its entirety does not find self-expression or self-fulfilment. Thus you may have the idea, the fixed idea, that the world is irrevocably miserable and incorrigible and therefore you will naturally plan your whole life to that end, all your occupation and preoccupation will be how to get away from this world, you will seek a far solitude, inner and outer, seek release from existence and merge into the Transcendent or the Void. On the other hand, if you have the idea that in spite of all appearances to the contrary the world is remediable and reclaimable, then your life takes on a different pattern. It will seek to find out ways

and means of the remedy and to what degree the possibility goes.

Now, the value of an idea cannot be determined by the idea itself. Usually one chooses because of some external reason or other: one's education, environment, one's personal temperament, likes and dislikes go a long way in determining one's choice. So the first thing you have to do is not to allow the thoughts to come in pell-mell, as and when they like. Thoughts must come only when you choose them and only those that you choose. There must be a conscious selection. How to proceed in this work? As your own thoughts cannot choose themselves, what you have to do at the outset is to call for a higher guidance and let yourself be absolutely impartial and passive in its hands.

A blankness is needed, a white emptiness somewhere behind—even if it does not come and occupy the front too. Give up personal choosing and wait for the Higher Direction—the Divine—to do with you whatever it wills. Given the requisite silence and reliance, the decision comes inevitably and you are moved to do automatically what is required to be done from moment to moment. At first you may not get the knowledge of the why and the wherefore of your action, you act merely as an automaton but with the luminous silence within and a tranquil aspiration attending. When once you have been trained in this unquestioning docility, then knowledge will be given to you gradually, at first only of a few steps ahead, later on for a fuller and completer perspective.

Mind, Organ of Separative Consciousness

THE world is one, indissolubly and solidly one: no part can be separated from any other. Any action anywhere affects the whole and nothing can be moved even by a hair's breadth without changing the entire balance. Each element literally lives, moves and has its being in every other and the totality is a rigidly unified mass.

If it is so, then there arises a difficulty, a dilemma. For the world to progress at all, under the circumstances, it must progress as a whole, *en masse*; it cannot progress piecemeal. The totality must advance in order that each element may progress and each element must advance so that the totality may progress. Perhaps this is what is happening actually in the world: but the result, if nothing else, has been rather slow. It will take not only millenniums but aeons for humanity to make any progress worth the name.

It need not be so however. Man is solidly one with the universe, true; but he has a faculty in him by which he can separate, isolate himself from the rest of the world. It is the mind's power of self-division and dissociation. Through this faculty man can put the world aside and outside himself (for a time, at least), cut away from it and concentrate upon his own being, his inner truth, in other words, make the progress in himself, as quickly as possible, independently, without waiting for others or the world to progress in any degree. And then when once he has made the progress himself, achieved a new higher status, he can turn back upon the world and bring to bear up on it the force of his progress and establish the progress more generally.

This power which in the inferior human consciousness appears as mind or mental discernment is the image or delegate here below of that very force of consciousness that originally separated the world from the Divine, created the ego and placed it as an objective reality against itself. It was a force of dividing consciousness, of exclusive concentration, that created the fission in the original unitary status of the Divine: it was that that precipitated the world of negation, of ignorance and inconstancy, out of the supreme Light and Reality.

It was a power of denial that severed the world from its pure source: the same power can now be utilised for the return back for the reintegration. The power that separated from the Divine is capable of separating from the world; the consciousness that moved away from the One Divine can move away also from the Multiple Ignorance. As the individualised element isolated itself from the unitary consciousness of the Divine, in the same way the individualised element in man can stand aloof from the unitary being of the world: as it came down the ladder of consciousness from the supreme light of the spirit into the lowest depth of unconscious dead matter, the same path it can take in the opposite way and from the unconsciousness rise into the fullness of the original light. The soul has freely chosen the bondage, he is free too to choose his freedom again. That is what the Upanishad meant when it said: *avidyayā mṛtyuṃ tīrtwā*, by the Ignorance he shall cross death.

The Personal and the Impersonal

As you go up in your consciousness towards the origin of things you come finally at the end of things: you are beyond the names and forms that make up the universe, beyond even the subtle names and forms at the topmost. You arrive at something formless, impersonal, unthinkable, unique, infinite and eternal. It is at best a vast force or a state of consciousness. When you come in contact with it, you lose your personal form, your separate individuality and become the featureless absolute. Many religions and philosophies consider this status to be the supreme, the highest and the origin of things. In reality, however, it is not the end of things nor the supreme status. You can rise further beyond. Your consciousness enters into the formless and impersonal and merges its separate existence there and then emerges again; it envisages a reality which is not formless but has a form, it is not impersonality but a Person, with which or with whom you can have a personal relation unlike the relation or lack of relation with the Impersonal. But this form beyond the formless is not like the forms of the inferior consciousness: it is the Form of forms. And it is not a person like a human being or even a divine being or god, but an essential Personality, the Person of persons. It has not the limitation or exclusiveness of ego-bounded individuality (even the gods are ego-bounded); it has a kind of fluid boundedness or outline which is recognizable as that of a definite Person, but it has not the fixity or rigidity of lower forms.

And yet to arrive at this supreme Person, to come in contact with Him, it is necessary to pass through and have the experience of the formless impersonal infinity. For that breaks the inferior moulds, the narrow egoistic formations which are

only aberrations or obscure images of the true Person.

Somewhat on the same line the vital too has to proceed to transform itself. It must get rid of its ignorant and violent impulses, its obscure formations: it must be thoroughly cleansed and purified. For that it must learn to be quiet and silent—absolutely still and passive; and in that quiet passivity to feel, to be conscious of the Divine Presence, to be saturated with it. When once that is done, it is called upon to come out and take part in active life. Normally, however, the tendency is, when one has withdrawn and lived an inward quieted life, on coming back to outer life, to turn to the old accustomed ways and reactions; one falls back into the old groove of the consciousness. The vital should then make the experience and the realisation of the Divine Presence dynamic so that it may be a living reality; the vital must be conscious of it in the midst of all activities, not merely in the indrawn state. The energy of the vital must be put out into a complete and perfected living, but it must not run into old moulds and take up the habitual modes; with the constant sense of the Divine, the everpresent truth and beauty of the Divine's consciousness, the vital will possess a new life and create a new pattern of living.

"I have Nothing, I am Nothing"

THE state is that of utter commonplaceness. The feeling that I am doing Yoga, that I am something and have a special work to do, that something has to be achieved, that life has a purpose etc., etc. all that has left and left a blank, a void inside and an absolutely mechanical automaton outside. I do the most ordinary things of life, as any other common man, like the routine work of a machine; I know nothing and have no impulse to know or to plan as to what I should do, how I am to move or why is it all like this. A great tranquillity and silence possess the whole being. There is no "I", no person to refer to in the consciousness: individuality has been totally abolished, a sweep of universality passes through the consciousness and makes it as it were a no-man's-land. The mind has laid down its burden and says it is free now and obedient to the call that may come to it. The vital too submits its adherence and awaits the order: it has no inclination or choice of its own. The physical is likewise wholly docile.

This state of supreme blankness and passivity borders on the experience of illusion—the illusoriness of the world and the vanity or hollowness of life. Creation does seem like an empty shell, with no meaning or purpose and no real truth of existence even: it is a shadow play that rests on nothing and vanishes into nothing. The great exponents of Illusoriness must have had an experience of this kind and considered therefore that—Nothingness—as the ultimate truth and mystery of existence.

Now when all sense of personality—not only the sense but even the fact itself—totally dissolved, the voice of the Supreme Divine was heard and His impulsion recorded. The *Prayers and Meditations* hereafter were written through such an im-

pulsion; it was truly automatic writing—the instrument did not know what it was writing and even did not understand the meaning of the recorded words, it was merely a copyist, it looked at the writing as a third person would.

The whole being in all its parts acted thus like a recording or transmitting agency. It was under such conditions—at the zero point of human personality and consciousness—that the instrument which so long lived apart and behind, concerned with itself more or less, was made to come forward and take up the work that the Divine demanded of it. The vessel that was completely empty, a universal and transcendental shape, came gradually to be filled, with the Divine's own will and its own formations.

Here or Elsewhere

It is easy and comfortable to go within and in an inner consciousness find and maintain a union, even a close union with the Divine. It is because of such a state of peace and bliss that many, nay, most who go there do not want to come back, to normal life upon this earth. And teachers, great or small, almost invariably, have taught that in the end it is best like that, and perhaps the only thing to do under the circumstances. For this life and this earth mean the very opposite of that inner heaven and that highest good. But some are not given this comfortable solution of the difficulty. They are asked to turn back and live the life of the earth. They are not allowed to remain cosy in a narrow room and be busy always with themselves alone. Indeed, is it not narrow egoism to seek only one's own salvation? When one has saved himself, is it not his duty—the logical outcome and implication of his personal freedom—that he should seek to help others in their salvation? Such was in fact the attitude of the Amitabha Buddha.

A house is on fire. It has a tarred roof. One can easily understand the fury of the fire. Some inmates who were trapped have managed to come out in time, although somewhat bruised and scalded. But there were others, some children, left inside. One of those who came out rushes back again through the flames and comes and goes till all are saved. He is badly burnt, he has risked his life: he did not mind and could not remain at a safe distance. He could not be contented with saving himself, which was to be sure a sufficient gain in one respect. This soul had a consciousness of his wider self.

In the same way, there are souls that have emerged out of the fire of earthly life and are enjoying the safety and security

of the heavens; but they have been called to come back into the world, add to the experience of the tranquil above the experience of the trouble below. Surely it increases the scope of their consciousness. But to turn upon the world means also to re-enter into ignorance, for this world means ignorance, as it is, it is nothing but ignorance. The rôle then of one who returns is once more to embrace ignorance, but with a view to bringing into it the light and bliss that he gained from above, permeating the stuff of the present world with the substance of the higher consciousness. It is a sacrifice demanded of him, thus to abandon the eternal felicity of the high heavens—the unbroken union with the Divine above—and to enter into the depths of “this great perilous world”: but this is a privilege too, to bring solace to the afflicted, the transforming light to obscure souls, the radiant energy to inert earth. It is a high privilege for which the luminous soul is thankful: he modestly accepts a gift of grace from the Supreme. He accepts the Ignorance and offers it: he lays it at the feet of the Supreme so that it may be transmuted into light—light here below. His own rôle is that of a modest intermediary.

When Imperfection is Greater Than Perfection

A PERFECTED consciousness is attained in the highest status of being, when it is full of light and delight, peace and purity, one with the Divine Consciousness. Such a Consciousness, when it comes down upon earth in its original unmixed clarity, lives as a foreign element and has no real contact with the world; it can have only a very indirect influence upon men and things. If the perfect, the Divine Consciousness has to be truly effective, has to change human and world nature, it must put on partially at least that nature; it must share in the imperfection of ignorance so that it can show how that imperfection can be dealt with and transformed. The Divine has to become human, even the ordinary human, in a sense, in the outward instrumental aspect, to a greater or lesser degree as needed, so that He may come in living contact with the obscure lower consciousness and put His light into it and gradually purify and illumine it. If, however, the consciousness retains its fullness of power and light makes its appearance as such, it may dazzle and overwhelm, as a meteor miracle, but leave nothing substantial behind. This is what has happened in the past of man's history. The saints and sages, the greatest and the most genuine among them, mostly dwelt apart from humanity in consciousness and even away from human contact; the earth could not profit wholly by their example.

Therefore the Mother says in her *Prayers and Meditations* that having gone beyond all desires still she had to live in the midst of desires; she had no choice of her own, no preference, no attachment, no need of anything, yet she was put in the conditions of very ordinary life, the normal human life; she

had to deal with the common man, handle the small insignificant objects of material existence. In one part of her being she had to identify herself with ignorance and obscurity, so much so that even the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness—the conscient and the inconscient—was for a time obliterated. Naturally, the inmost being in its inner self remained always calm, luminous, inviolable, but it put around itself this body of ordinary nature to meet its ordinary reactions and through them gradually to uplift and train it to manifest and incarnate the inmost divine.

The gods are perfect; but it is said, they have to become men, come down upon earth and assume human proportions—that is, imperfections,—if they wish to progress further, attain still higher levels of consciousness. For, the gods are perfect each in his own limited and well-defined and therefore unchangeable type; but man means an aspiring soul, that is to say, infinity—his very imperfection is a sign and symbol of ever greater possibility; the fluidity of his nature means an opportunity.

Individual and Collective Soul

THE individual has a soul. Likewise a collection of individuals, a group too has a soul. When persons habitually meet together for a certain purpose, they form a set or society and gradually tend to develop a common consciousness which is the beginning of a soul. At school, they who read together, the class, they who play together, the team, all who live and move together inspired by the same or similar impulses and ideas possess a rudimentary soul. In the same way, a bigger group, the nation has also a soul, each its own according to its nature, tradition and culture. Even a continent has a soul. One can speak of the soul consciousness of Europe, of Asia or of Africa. Indeed each cell of an organism has a consciousness of its own; it may be said to be the unit individual consciousness. Many such cells combine to form the organism, the individual (who in this way may be viewed as a composite or collective being). Many individuals form the family—each family with its group consciousness (whence the idea of *kuladharma*, the genius of the family or the tradition and stamp of a Royal House). Many families formed the tribe, here too each with its particular consciousness. And then families and tribes have formed the modern nation, each one a distinct and almost a well-developed soul. The grouping continues to enlarge and we have the many nations combining to form the human group as a whole; humanity too has its own consciousness and its own soul. There is no limit to the volume or dimension of the group. The earth has its soul consciousness, even as the sun or a star or any other planet. The solar system or a galactic system too is moved by its own secret consciousness.

The Wonder of It All

THE ordinary consciousness takes for granted the things that exist as they are. It does not question; it finds everything very natural and as a matter of course. It sees and expects to see the same old familiar things repeated and is not struck by any extraordinary note in them. That is the unconsciousness of the ordinary consciousness. But when you begin to be conscious, when you look about and gaze at things, you awake, as it were, from sleep, and begin to question, to wonder: why is it like this, how is it so, what is it, to what purpose etc. etc. Normally you see the sun rise, rain fall, earth rotate—but you do not spend a thought over any of these objects or happenings, except so far as they are useful or simply nuisance. But when there is a light in you and you become conscious, conscious of yourself and of things around you, everything acquires an importance, a sense and you are full of wonder, wondering at a wonderful creation. The more you advance, the more the light grows in you, all the more your wonder increases. As your awareness increases, your interest too increases. A new beauty surrounds, flows out of every object and event. You do not take things for granted and let them pass mechanically, but greet every one of them as a guest, with whom you wish to make acquaintance and be familiar, each one having a message for you and yourself something to deliver. That is a source of inexhaustible delight and of ever increasing knowledge.

To Learn and to Understand

It is one thing to learn (*apprendre*), quite another to understand (*comprendre*). In learning you take in a thing by your surface mind and it is a thing that comes in from outside like a foreign body; it is put into you, almost driven and thrust into you. You do not absorb it, make it wholly your own. If you are not mindful, leave it aside for sometime, it goes clean out of your memory. Understanding a thing, on the other hand, means, you absorb it, get it into the stuff of your being, you live it in your consciousness within. When you have understood a thing you never forget it; it has become an element of your consciousness. Years and years might have passed, yet the thing would be as clear and vivid as it was on the first day. Why do you forget so easily the lessons that you learn—with pain and difficulty—from books or at school from teachers? It is because you simply learn, but do not understand. You retain in your brain the words, the outer formula or forms, you note down the information; but what they stand for, their import and inner law, the living truth escape you totally. You read Einstein, read over and over again his formulas and equations and even commit them to memory—learn by rote; but after a time, if you lose touch with them, they vanish from your mind or become very vague and misty and you have to start again. That is because you learnt Einstein simply as a lesson, whereas if you entered into the perceptions these forms embody, the inner principles that determine them, if the Einsteinian consciousness became in some way your consciousness, then you would have understood and never forgotten. It would not be a lesson but an experience. What is needed, then, is this inner awakening by which you live a thing, identify yourself with it, become one with it and not

simply meet or make a mere nodding acquaintance with it. Unless there is this awakening or openness, as we say, in the consciousness, however much a lesson is thrust into you, it will not enter deeply enough. You may learn, like a parrot, but you will not understand, it will pass over your head and soon be forgotten.

Indeed it was not very much necessary for the ancient sages and occultists to try to hide their knowledge in an obscure language, in codes and symbols and ciphers for fear of misuse by the common uninitiate; even if they had expressed their knowledge in ordinary language, ordinary people would not have understood it at all. It would be like my speaking to you in Chinese, you would not make out anything of it. One comprehends only what one already possesses, that is to say, you must have within you something at least of what you want to know and understand, something corresponding to it, similar in nature and vibration. That is what I mean when I say that you should be open, your mind and consciousness should be turned and attuned to the object it wishes to seize; it must have some light in it in order to receive the light outside and beyond. If it is mere obscurity, the light does not light; even if it manages to come it departs soon or is engulfed in the darkness.

The human mind can seize things only in three dimensions. A three-dimensional knowledge is its normal possession. But there is a fourth and a fifth dimension (which some intellectuals in Europe have begun to guess at): indeed there are at least as many as twelve dimensions in reference to the present creation. We cannot readily picture a four-dimensional object, a fifth dimension borders on the bizarre and beyond that it is all a blank to the human consciousness. If I spoke of these multi-dimensional experiences, what would you make of them?

For example, you read and hear much and constantly of the Divine. What is He or It to you in reality? Something vague, misty, wordy. The perception is not concrete to you. You can doubt, deny, refuse credence as you like. But if you once experience it, hold it in your inner being and consciousness, in however small a way, however little of it, if you get the direct contact in whatever manner—well, the thing is

unforgettable, it lives, lives for ever. If the whole world denies and scoffs, you are unshaken, you smile at the world, for you know what you know.

What then is the way to this experience, to this opening in the consciousness? The Presence is there, the Light is there, the Grace always leans down to you, surrounds you. On your side you have to make a corresponding gesture. You have to ask for the thing sincerely, whole-heartedly, aspire for it tirelessly. You have to ask for it persistently, without losing faith or trust; you have to go on perseveringly without counting the time taken.

There is an iron door there nailed and fixed. It has to be broken open. It is the door that shuts you within your narrow ego-consciousness. You have to throw down that barrier and widen yourself out. You have to will for it, exert for it with a settled constancy. There is the pressure on the other side too, the pressure of Grace. Your aspiring will meeting the Grace will surely make the necessary opening in the dead wall.

The Coming of Superman

Is it said that when the supramental descends, it will come with such an overwhelming and irresistible force that all humanity will be changed forthwith, that is to say, all men whether they wanted it or not, sought for it or not, would be automatically transformed? It cannot be so: it is a comfortable doctrine putting a premium on laziness and inertia.

There is no necessity for all men turning into supermen, the normal human race disappearing altogether. Mankind need not become extinct like the ancient Mammoth and Mastodon in order to give place to Superman. Both the races can dwell together; earth is wide enough. Man has appeared; for that reason the ape has not disappeared, although it is said man came out of the ape genus. The superman will come and live with his new law of life; man too will continue with his human dharma. Not only so, they need not be separated into watertight compartments, there may be interaction or interchange between the two. With the coming of Superman there will naturally be a descent of harmony and peace and happiness and goodwill into the earth's atmosphere and mankind is likely to be benefited by it. The conditions of life will be changed and will affect man's life too. An element of light and joy and tranquillity will enter into humanity's normal dealings. And man, on his side, may offer his services as the recruiting ground of the super-race. Furthermore, the whole of Nature being a unified movement, no level of creation being totally separate from others, the change may very well touch the animal and even the vegetable kingdom. The plant may put on, for example, a luminous or greener tint and the animal may develop a happier and livelier spring.

There may be less scarcity, dearth, aridity, fewer convulsions and catastrophes on earth.

Always, however, exceptions are possible. Even now, where conditions of life are happier and things are expected to be more smooth and harmonious, there exist people who are by nature so obscure, quarrelsome and turbulent that they are not touched at all and go on in their way finding always occasions to quarrel and fight and create trouble. They will be in the midst of the new humanity as Hottentots or Head-hunters—aborigines and savages—are today in the eyes of civilised humanity.

Towards Redemption

As I have often said, creation is the self-objectivisation of the Supreme Divine; it is the supreme consciousness putting itself out of itself so that it may look at itself. In so doing—in self-objectifying and self-dividing—it scattered itself abroad: the one infinite multiplied itself into infinite atoms. Not only so, in detaching itself from itself the consciousness became the very opposite of itself: consciousness became unconsciousness, spirit became matter, delight became pain, knowledge became ignorance, and light became darkness. Boundless universality was the essential nature of the Divine, now it got clotted into the knots of egoism upon which is based this inconscient creation. In the midst of this utter negation, this denial by the universe of its origin, the Divine Love descended and lodged itself in order to bring back the erring creation to its lost home. The Divine Love became involved and entangled in the Inconscient, became one with it; only so could she (it was indeed the Divine Mother in her Grace) suffuse the inconscient universe with her own substance and transmute it into its original nature. The first effect or visible sign of this descent or divine infusion is the emergence of the psychic or the soul element in the material body: it is the speck of consciousness imbedded in matter, inhabiting the apparently dead particle or aggregate of particles, which continually grows in and through its relation of action and reaction with its surrounding unconsciousness, and at the same time extending its light into that darkness transforms it gradually into what it was originally at its source.

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The origin of creation is an individualisation—the mani-

festation or emanation of many, as units, out of the undivided and indivisible Single. It meant freedom for each unit to choose: the individual became, so to say, a unit of freedom. The immediate result, however, was not very successful, apparently, that is to say. For the individual unit chose to follow a path exactly opposite to its origin: the individualisation happened as if an element shot out of the infinite unity and flung itself in its momentum, as far away as possible, to the other pole. That is how the one spirit became the infinite particles of inconscient matter. The purpose and problem then set was to bring back the straying elements to their source and origin. The work was long travail. It took and it is taking even now ages for the one Being who could do the thing to prepare slowly, mount the steps gradually along which creation slid down, recover the ground painfully and achieve the hidden purpose, vindicating amply the deviation and the fall. Through devious ways, long, winding, arduous marches the spirit of evolution laboured through millenniums; it was the instrument utilised by the Divine Grace.

The original individual was a hard concentrated point of ego, concerned wholly and absolutely with itself. So a situation of give and take was brought about so that even to exist meant to exist through others. Human society began in this way. The solitary human animal for its own sake had to come out of its solitariness, take to a mate and thus gradually bring up a family. The wall of egoism was broken to that extent, its scope extended. The enlargement of the ego continued—still continues—increasing the content of the unity. From the family the human ego enlarged into the tribe, and the tribal ego has now enlarged into the nation. Larger and larger aggregates are being formed in place of the original individual unities. The nations too are now approaching and interpenetrating each other and in many ways the whole of humanity has been moving as an aggregate. The individual has thus learnt to find himself in the life of humanity as a whole. He has to look up—or will soon have to look up—to the whole creation as one existence in and through which he has to exist. Thus the universe is recovering its original indivisible unity, but having gained something in the process; for it is now no longer the featureless unity at the source but an enriched and multiple

unity in expression. Furthermore the individual can proceed yet beyond. He has to and now is able to, not only in his individual but in his collective consciousness—turn back and move straight to its original unity: he can establish direct contact, commune and unite with the Divine Himself from whom it came and drifted away. The ranges of ascent are within him and are in line with those outside which the universe is traversing in the path of evolution. Such is the process the Divine Grace has undertaken to fulfil the Divine's purpose in creation.

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The earliest sense of "ego" or "I" is limited and confined to one's own self as against others and other things. It is then that one has the feeling of want and asks for things he has not. He has shut out from his wing-spread men and things, of his own accord, to enjoy his individual free will: he is now compelled to ask of them materials to enjoy, to grow and increase, even to exist. On the other hand, if you enlarge yourself, if you identify yourself with all, then you find all things within yourself, you have no need to go out and seek for them, you have no feeling of want. Whatever is needed to be brought and utilised for a definite purpose or in a particular circumstance, at a certain time or place, is automatically presented then and there. You do not, however, lose your real "I". Your "I" finds its "I" in all other "I"s and all other "I"s in the "I" you call yourself. You have lost your old ego, the small narrow person, and transcended and transmuted it into the cosmic and transcendental ego. The Divine is that ego and that individual person. In reality it is the Divine alone who is that, in the supreme and truest sense.

*Sweet Holy Tears**

THE tears that the soul sheds are holy, are sweet; they come bidden by the Divine and are blessed by His Presence. They are like the dew from heaven. For they are pure, they are spontaneous, welling out of a heart of innocent freedom. The feeling is infinitely impersonal, completely egoless: there is only an intense movement of self-giving, total simple self-giving. Tears are the natural expression in one who needs help, who has the complete surrender and simplicity of a child, the abdication of all vanity. Such tears are beautiful in their nature and beneficent in character. They are therefore like dewdrops that belong to heaven as it were and come from there with a sovereign healing virtue. Such tears are not "idle tears", as the English poet says in a vein of melancholy, they are instinct with a power, an effective energy which brings you relief, ease and peace. And it is not only pure but purifying, this feeling made of quiet intensity and aspiration and surrender: it is unmixed, free from any demand or need of reward or return; it is so impersonal that the aspiration is, so to say, even independent of the object for which it exists.

At a supreme crisis of the soul when there seems to be no issue before you, if you come, in the naked simplicity of your whole being, pour yourself out in a flood of self-giving, to one who can be your refuge—in the end the Divine alone can be such a one—and who can respond fully to the intensity and ardent sincerity of your approach, you come holding your tearful soul as a complete self-offering, you do not know what tremendous response you call forth, the blessing divine you bring down in and around you.

* The Mother: *Prayers and Meditations*, 12 July 1918

“I prepared the Feast”¹

It was a banquet I prepared for men. Instead of a life of misery and suffering, of obscurity and ignorance I brought to them a life of light and joy and freedom. I took all the pains the task demanded and when it was ready I offered it to mankind to partake of it. But man in his foolishness and pigheadedness rejected it, did not want it. He preferred to remain in his dark miserable hole. Now, what am I to do with my Feast? I cannot let it go waste, throw it to the winds. So I offered it to my Lord and laid it at his feet. He accepted it. He alone can enjoy it and honour it.

The Feast is that of Transformation, the Divine Life on earth. Man is not capable of it naturally, cannot attain it by his own effort or personal worth. It is the Divine who is to bring it down Himself. He is to manifest Himself and thus establish His own life here below. Then only will it be possible for the human creature to open to the urgency of the new beauty and offer his surrender.

It was not easy to prebate the Feast. I had to bear the full load of the cross and ascend the calvary. Jesus as he mounted to his destiny with the Cross on his back stumbled often and fell and rose again with bruised limbs to begin again the arduous journey. Even so, this being too had to go through many disillusionings and deceptions, many painful and brutal experiences. It was not a smooth and straight going, but a tortuous and dangerous ascent. But at the end of the tunnel there is always the light. The calvary and the crucifixion culminated in the Resurrection: the divine Passion of Christ flowered into this supreme Recompense. Here too after all the dark and adverse vicissitudes lies the fulfilment of transformation. One must pass through the entire valley of death and rise to the topmost summit to receive and achieve the fullness of the glory. One must leave behind all the lower ranges of ignorance, the entire domain of human consciousness, come out of the imperfection man is made of; then only will he put on the divine nature as his own body and substance.

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The Cross symbolises all the suffering and difficulty, the

¹ The Mother: *Prayers and Meditations*, 3 September 1919

renunciation and self-denudation that the ascent to the Goal involves. The Calvary of the Christian legend means Ascension and Resurrection is Transformation in our sadhana. The Cross is also symbolic of the Transformed consciousness. It has three branches and represents the triple Divine, the Divine in his three modes of existence. The top branch, the vertical portion above the transverse line, stands for the supreme or transcendent Divine, one who is above manifestation; the middle—the transverse or horizontal branch stands for the expanse of the universal consciousness, the Cosmic Divine; and the bottom portion, the vertical line below the transverse stands for the individual Divine immanent or imbedded in the manifestation. You will note that the flower we call transformation has a form similar to the Cross.

Identification of Consciousness

THE *Prayers*¹ speak always of the identification of consciousness with the Supreme. There is also the other identification of the consciousness, on the other side, namely, with things and beings, with the world outside: to that also the *Prayers* refer constantly. In reality, however, there is only one consciousness; it is everywhere, in all objects, in the universe and beyond. When a limit is put around it somewhere, a frame is erected, then it becomes or appears to become an individual consciousness. It is man's ego, a spot or point cutting and shutting itself off from the global consciousness, that has thus separated itself from the Divine; it is that ego, that separative consciousness which is asked to break the limits and regain its natural unity with the one consciousness. And when it can do so it is said to have made the identification with the Supreme. Apart from this, however, when the consciousness has separated and individualised itself in different centres, even then it exists and acts in hiding in all the multiple varieties of forms, from the tiniest to the biggest. The same consciousness is alive in the atom, the stone, the plant, the animal, in the earth and the sun and the stars, in the universe as a whole. Each object big or small, living or non-living, conscious or unconscious, contains that consciousness at its centre and embodies or expresses it in various ways.

Consider, for example, your country, India. When you say "India", what do you mean to convey? Is it the geographical boundary that goes by the name or the expanse of soil contained within that boundary or its hills and rivers, forests and fields or the beasts that range in it or its human inhabitants or all of these together? No, it is something else; it is a centre of consciousness which has as its bodily frame the particular

¹ The Mother: *Prayers and Meditations*.

geographical boundary: it is that which dwells in its mountains and meadows, vibrates in its vegetation, lives and moves in its animal kingdom; and it is that which is behind the mind and aspiration of its people, animating its culture and civilisation and moving it towards higher and higher illuminations and achievements. It is not India alone, but every country upon earth has its consciousness, which is the central core of its life and culture. Not only so, even the earth itself, the earth as a whole, has a consciousness at its centre and is the embodiment of that consciousness: and earth's evolution means the growth and expression of that consciousness. Likewise the sun too has a solar consciousness, a solar being presiding over its destiny. Further, the universe too has a cosmic consciousness, one and indivisible, moving and guiding it. And still beyond there lies the transcendental consciousness, outside creation and manifestation.

Consciousness being one and the same everywhere fundamentally, through your own consciousness you can identify yourself with the consciousness that inhabits any other particular formation, any object or being or world. You can, for example, identify your consciousness with that of a tree. Stroll out one evening, find a quiet place in the countryside; choose a big tree—a mango tree, for instance—and go and take your seat at its root, with your back resting or leaning against the trunk. Still yourself, be quiet and wait, see or feel what happens in you. You will feel as if something is rising up within you, from below upward, coursing like a fluid, something that makes you feel at once happy and contented and strong. It is the sap mounting in the tree with which you have come in contact, the vital force, the secret consciousness in the tree that is comforting, restful and health-giving. Well, tired travellers sit under a banyan tree, birds rest upon its spreading branches, other animals—and even beings too (you must have heard of ghosts haunting a tree)—take shelter there. It is not merely for the cool or cosy shade, not merely for the physical convenience it gives, but the vital refuge or protection that it extends. Trees are so living, so sentient that they can be almost as friendly as an animal or even a human being. One feels at home, soothed, protected, strengthened under their overspreading foliage.

"I will give you one instance. There was an old mango tree in one of our gardens—very old, leafless and dried up, decrepit and apparently dying. Everybody was for cutting it down and making the place clean and clear for flowers or vegetables. I looked at the tree. Suddenly I saw within the dry bark, at the core, a column of thin and dim light, a light greenish in colour, mounting up, something very living. I was one with the consciousness of the tree and it told me that I should not allow it to be cut down. The tree is still living and in fairly good health. As a young girl barely in my teens I used to go into the woods not far from Paris, *Bois de Fontainebleau*: there were huge oak trees centuries old perhaps. And although I knew nothing of meditation then, I used to sit quietly by myself and feel the life around, the living presence of something in each tree that brought to me invariably the sense of health and happiness.

"Another instance will show another kind of identification. It is an experience to which I have often referred. I was seated, drawn in and meditating. I felt that my physical body was dissolving or changing: it was becoming wider and wider, losing its human characters and taking gradually the shape of a globe. Arms, legs, head were no longer there: it became spherical, having exactly the form of the earth. I felt I had become the earth. I was the earth in form and substance and all terrestrial objects were in me, animals and people, living and moving in me, trees and plants and even inanimate objects as part of myself, limbs of my body: I was the earth-consciousness incarnate."

But the point is to be this individual consciousness anywhere or everywhere and still to maintain the higher, the universal and transcendent, the supreme consciousness, to be simultaneously conscious in both the modes to the utmost degree.

The Central Consciousness

VERY often this was the experience: union with the Supreme is established, but as soon as the consciousness was about to settle and merge in the bliss of the union, it was called back and had to turn to the outside world to the ordinary affairs of ordinary consciousness. As if I was given to understand that it was not for me to forget and reject the life of the physical world and pass into the Beyond, but to maintain the contact, the closest contact, between this world and the Beyond and hold both together in one consciousness. The process is somewhat like this: you withdraw the consciousness from the world outside and turn inward; you withdraw even from your own physical activities and physical perceptions; you withdraw further in this way step by step through all the grades of life movements and mental movements, go deep inward and high upward till you reach the highest summit: the absolute silence and indivisible unity with the immutable single reality. This was the aim and, generally, the end of all the greatest spiritual disciplines of the past. We too have to possess this realisation; but for us, it is the basis, the indispensable basis, no doubt, all the same it is the starting-point. Sri Aurobindo has always said that our yoga begins where other yogas end. For what we aim at is not merely the attainment of the summit reality, the consciousness beyond, but to bring it down, make it a living and actual reality in the physical world. The older yogas intended to save the world, but accomplished only the salvation of the individual, one's own self, by passing beyond the world, realising the supreme Spirit and Truth and never coming back. Thus the world remained what it has ever been: only a few escaped out of it. Our yoga enters its crucial phase, its characteristic and its most difficult turn,

when it seeks to bring down the highest consciousness once realised on the heights and make it enter into the life of the world and fix it there as the permanent possession of earthly life.

The key is to find the poise where both the extremes meet, the junction of the two levels of consciousness, the transcendent and the manifested, where the two not only do not contradict or oppose each other, but are aspects or modes of the same Truth, indissolubly united and unified. It is just the borderline, the last point of the manifested world and the first point of the Unmanifest (as one goes upward). If you are able to find the point you have not to make a choice between two irreconcilables, either the Brahman or the world. It is only when you miss the point that you are forced to the choice: some choose the other side of the border, the static consciousness, the eternal immutable pure being, self-absorbed and self-sufficient; others who dare not do that, turn to the world and remain entangled and drowned in its darkness, ignorance, travail, undelight, impotency and misery. But, as I have said, this is not the necessary or inevitable solution—if solution it is at all—of the enigma.

The first condition, however, to arrive at the crucial or synthetic state of consciousness (which is, in fact, the basic supramental consciousness, as Sri Aurobindo calls it) is the realisation that the world, that is to say, physical consciousness does not exist by itself. By itself, it is nothing. As the Prayer says, "it knows nothing, it can do nothing, it is nothing."¹ This realisation must not be merely a mental perception, a perception in the inner consciousness alone; but the body, the physical existence itself must be conscious and in that consciousness see and experience the truth that by itself it is a void, non-existence: it becomes so however only to find that it is real, supremely real when it is suffused with its true substance, when it is the embodiment or vehicle of the supramental consciousness.

¹ The Mother: *Prayers and Meditations*, 19 May 1914

The Constants of the Spirit

THE Divine exists in three modes: (1) Existence, (2) Consciousness and (3) Bliss. Pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss—Sat-Chit-Ananda—these are the three fundamental elements out of which the world is made; they are everywhere in all things, in all beings, in all domains and levels of being. Sachchidananda is the supreme reality that is behind all, even here below, behind the mind, behind the life and behind the body too and behind each form in each of these domains. It is that which upholds and sustains everything. Therefore in order to realise it, it is not necessary to mount up, leaving behind the mental, the vital and physical existence and go beyond. Usually when one seeks Sachchidananda one looks for it outside the universe, above and beyond the creation, in the transcendent. In reality, however, one can meet it from any place where one happens to be, either in the mind or in the vital or even in the physical; one has only to withdraw and sink down, or get behind: it is there always. To meet Sachchidananda in and through the physical existence is not very much more difficult or rare a thing than the other ways; it is more difficult and rare to maintain it there constantly and consciously, to make of it a dynamic physical possession. That is the work to be done and for which Sri Aurobindo came.

Selfless Worker

THE Prayer says: "I look for my conscious mind and I find it no more..."¹ Normally one is conscious of oneself. Whatever one does or whenever one does something, the consciousness always remains behind, "I am here, I am doing". And if this sense of "I am" is not there, one can do nothing. All action stops automatically if I do not see or feel that I am acting. But that is the nature of ordinary consciousness; in the spiritual consciousness things are otherwise. Spiritual consciousness means the consciousness in which this sense of "I am doing" or even "I am" has disappeared, got dissolved. Truly, the work is done not by me, by the sense of "I-ness", but by Prakriti, Nature, apparently by Lower Nature, secretly by Higher Nature. When the "I" disappears, the force that has been working continues to work, only the sense of "I" attached to it (in ignorance and by ignorance) is no longer there. Or, the "I" has completely merged itself into the working Force and is one with it. What is conscious is not the personality or the individual I, but the Force of action.

¹ The Mother: *Prayers and Meditations*, 7 April 1914

Second Sight

WE know that animals generally possess sharp senses to an extraordinary degree. They can hear and smell at a distance far beyond what is normal to the human sense. Give a kerchief used by a man to a dog, it will spot the man among a thousand. An elephant will take you straight to a place miles away where there is water, if you happen to be stranded in waterless surroundings. Where there is no question of sight or smell, even then the animals perceive things in a queer way: an elephant, again, for example, refusing to advance further upon a road, because, as it was discovered later on, the road was hollow inside and would have sunk down had the animal walked upon it. There are other countless phenomena to prove the keenness and subtlety of the animal sense or *instinct*, as it is called.

Perception means contact with the object. Now, what is it that contacts? In ordinary sense-perception, the normal human sense-perception, for example, it is the physical vibration emanating from the object that contacts the physical organ: the distance at which the vibration can be received depending on the sensitivity of the recipient nerves. In man the sensitivity is limited, in the animal it is highly intense. This is however, only one factor of the phenomenon. We will explain.

As it is well known, there are three levels of consciousness: the physical, the vital and the mental; for the present we leave out of consideration the fourth or the spiritual (including the psychic). Not only so, in each level or plane all the others are also involved i.e. lie secreted. Thus, in the mind there is a vital mind and a physical mind, in the vital there is a mental vital and a physical vital. So, in the physical too there are these three grades: (1) physical physical, (2) vital physical and (3) mental physical.

We will now better understand the process of contact in sense perception. The purely material contact, physical vibration touching the physical nerves of the particular organ is an instance of the physical physical perception: the dog smelling or the elephant hearing at extraordinary distances. We have heard of men who, by putting their ear upon the ground, are able to catch sounds coming from a great distance and practically inaudible to others standing by. But there is another class where the material vibration is not at issue, it is the vital vibration in the physical touching the vital physical of the receiver. The elephant finding the water or sensing the hollow road is an instance in point. The mental physical, the last of the three is a kind of intuition in the physical, that is what is usually called "instinct". A cat, for example, put in a sack and banished miles away from its home, will find its way back; a dog will go round the world almost and find and recognise its master even many years after (the first to recognise Ulysses was his dog). In man too the vital physical, more especially the mental physical not unoften finds room for play, although his physical physical i.e. purely material sensibility is extremely limited. This limitation of the physical sensibility in general, to whatever sphere it may belong, is due to the intellectual or rational bias that has developed in him. In the more unsophisticated races or types the sensibility is still maintained. Man can, however, cultivate, consciously develop these faculties: it then becomes what is called a system of Yoga. A familiar example of the mental physical action as cultivated in man is offered by the water diviner or dowser, as he is called. But, as I have said, the normal effect of human rationality is to inhibit the spontaneous action of the senses as it is natural with the animal.

It is interesting to note that animals in the wild state maintain intact their instinctive capacity, their "second sight", but begin to lose it when they live with men, come under the influence of human mind and reason, become "domesticated". A cow habituated to free grazing in the fields will never touch the poisonous grass, will always avoid it and take only the harmless and healthy variety; but kept within the stable, accustomed to a closed life, it loses its natural instinct, gets confused, does not know how to distinguish the right from the wrong

food, being always given ready-made things by the master.

Human contact has thus a harmful effect upon the animal's instinctive life. But in another way it may have an uplifting influence too. Some of the refined human sentiments—sympathy, gratitude, faithfulness, self-sacrifice—in a pronounced human way find expression in animals that are domesticated and live close to man and within the human atmosphere. It is true many of these feelings are not totally absent in the animal kingdom (especially in the higher strata) in its natural or wild state, but they belong to the level of pure feeling or impulse and have not risen to the level of sentiments which have a mental element infused into their vital stuff. Indeed a strong mental element, a reasoning capacity sometimes very clearly develops in the domestic animal.

The animal acts by instinct, we say; that is to say, it goes straight to the thing to be done: in order to do a thing it does not make a choice between possibilities, there is no selective process in its consciousness. It is the human consciousness alone that says, "this is not to be done, but that to be done, not this but that" or puts the question, "which one, to be or not to be?" This is what we mean by discrimination or deliberation. Normally, this faculty is absent in the animal. We have said of refined feelings in man; "refined" here need not mean always ennobled or morally elevated; it may mean also more subtle, more complicated and be applied to some baser—acutely perverse—feelings which are perhaps peculiarly human. Domestic animals sometimes contract them from men: jealousy, spitefulness, vengeance, vindictiveness of an extreme degree are likely to be found more among animals living with men than those that are in the wild state. We have heard of elephants brooding over a hurt or even an insult for long months and taking revenge when occasion presents itself. And we have heard of a cat jumping out of a window into the street below and killing itself simply because it thought its mistress showed more love towards another cat.

The humanising of animals living with men, through its good and bad effects, has an evolutionary value: that is to say, some animals in that way attain almost to a human status in their soul. And occultists state that souls do pass in this manner from the animal to the human incarnation.

The Mother on Herself

THERE are two things that should not be confused with each other, namely, what one is and what one does, what one is essentially and what one does in the outside world. They are very different. I know what I am. And what others think or say or whatever happens in the world, that truth remains unaffected, unaltered, a fact. It is real to itself and the world's denial or affirmation does not increase or diminish that reality. But being what I am, what I do actually is altogether a different question: that will depend upon the conditions and circumstances in which things are and in and through which I am to work. I know the truth I bring, but how much of it finds expression in the world depends upon the world itself. What I bring, the world must have the capacity and the will to accept: otherwise even if I bring with me the highest and the most imperative truth, it will be, absolutely as it were, non-existent for a consciousness that does not recognise or receive it: the being with that consciousness will not profit a jot by it.

You will say if the truth I bring is supreme and omnipotent, why does it not compel the world to accept it, why can it not break the world's resistance, force man to accept the good it refuses? But that is not the way in which the world was created nor the manner in which it moves and develops. The origin of creation is freedom: it is a free choice in the consciousness that has projected itself as the objective world. This freedom is the very character of its fundamental nature. If the world denies its supreme truth, its highest good, it does so in the delight of its free choice; and if it is to turn back and recognise that truth and that good, it must do so in the same delight of free choice. If the erring world was ordered to turn right and immediately did so, if things were done in a trice, through

miracles, there would be then no point in creating a world. Creation means a play of growth: it is a journey, a movement in time and space through graded steps and stages. It is a movement away—away from its source—and a movement towards: that is the principle or plan on which it stands. In this plan there is no compulsion on any of the elements composing the world to forswear its natural movement, to obey to a dictate from outside: such compulsion would break the rhythm of creation.

And yet there is a compulsion. It is the secret pressure of one's own nature that drives it forward through all vicissitudes back again to its original source. When it is said that the Divine Grace can and should do all, it means nothing more and nothing less than that: the Divine Grace only accelerates the process of return and recognition. But on the side of the journeying element, the soul, there must be awakened a conscious collaboration, an initial consent and a constantly renewed adhesion. It is this that brings out, at least helps to establish outside on the physical level, the force that is already and has always been at work within and on the subtler and higher levels. That is the pattern of the play, the system of conditions under which the game is carried out. The Grace works and incarnates in and through a body of willing and conscious collaborators: these become themselves part and parcel of the Force that works.

The truth I bring will manifest itself and will be embodied upon earth; for, it is the earth's and world's inevitable destiny. The question of time is not relevant. In one respect the truth which I say will be made manifest is already fully manifest, is already realised and established: there is no question of time there. It is in a consciousness timeless or eternally present. There is a process, a play of translation between that timeless poise and the poise in time that we know here below. The measure of that hiatus is very relative, relative to the consciousness that measures, long or short according to the yardstick each one brings. But that is not the essence of the problem: the essence is that the truth is there active, in the process of *materialisation*, only one should have the eye to see it and the soul to greet it.

PART SEVEN

Realisation, Past and Future

THE whole material and physical world, the whole earth—I mention earth, because we are concerned directly and much more with it than other regions—has been till now governed by forces of consciousness that come from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. Even the thing man has named God is a force, a power in the Overmind. The entire universe has been, so to say, under the domination of this status of consciousness. Even then, you have to pass through many intermediary grades, or levels to arrive at the Overmind and when you reach there the first impression is that of a dazzling light that almost blinds you. But one can and has to press on and go beyond. Sri Aurobindo says, the rule of the Overmind is precisely coming to its end and the rule of the Supermind will replace it. All the past spiritual experiences were concerned with the Overmind: so it is a thing known to all who have found the Divine and are identified with Him. What Sri Aurobindo says is this that there is something more than the Overmind, something that lies a step higher and that it is now the turn of this higher status to come down and reign. We need not talk much of Overmind, because all the saints and seers, all religions and spiritual disciplines, scriptures and philosophies have spoken about it at length. All the gods known and familiar to men are there in its Pantheon. What we want, what is needed at present is a new revelation, a manifestation in a new manner of which very few were conscious in the past. We are not here merely to repeat the past.

But it is so difficult. It is difficult for people to come out of experiences they have had, of what they have heard and read about always and everywhere. It is difficult for them not to think of the Supermind in terms of the Overmind, not to con-

fuse the Supermind with the Overmind. They are unable to conceive of anything beyond or different. Sri Aurobindo used to say always that his Yoga began where all the past Yogas ended: in order to realise his Yoga one must have already arrived at the extreme limit of what the ancients realised. In other words, one must have had already the perception of the Divine, the union and identification with the Divine. This divinity, Sri Aurobindo says, is the Divine of the Overmind which is itself something quite unthinkable for the human consciousness, and even to reach there one has to rise through many planes of consciousness and, as I said, one gets dazzled and dazed even at this level.

There are beings of the vital world who, whenever they appear to man, are taken by him for the supreme godhead. You may call it a disguise, but it is a very successful disguise, for people who see it most often get thoroughly convinced that what they see is indeed God himself. And yet such a god is only a vital being. Even so, the beings of the Overmind are stupendous in comparison with us, human beings, who are truly bewildered whenever we come in contact with such entities. And Supermind and supramental beings are yet beyond. So you realise the distance to be covered.

But there is a kind of Grace that comes to your help. If a scientist had again to go over all the experiments that have been done, all that others have found in the past in his line in order to make a further progress, to come to a new discovery, then he will have to pass his whole life in repeating the past and will have no time left for anything else. The scientist just opens instead a book or consults another person who is conversant with the past and gets all the knowledge he requires of it. Sri Aurobindo wanted to do something like that in the spiritual domain. He asks you to gather the experience of the past,—it is all there recorded in earth's history, and pass on; basing yourself upon that, you rise up to still higher ranges.

You may pertinently ask, however, why we have not started with overmental beings; we should have had here, say, Vivekanandas only and not ordinary frail human creatures.

You think the work would have been easier? Such beings, on the contrary, would have been less manageable and malleable.

For what is most difficult is to convince someone who has had already a realisation. He believes he has reached the goal and no further progress is necessary for him. It generally happens especially to men who have made effort and realised the object of the effort that they stop with that, because they feel they have reached their final goal. They get settled and fixed there. It was their personal goal and they have got it. Their brain gets crystallised and their consciousness fossilised. They will live there all their life and will never know how to move. So I say, those who have had an experience or a realisation in themselves are not necessarily the most advanced. Such a person lacks an element of simplicity, modesty, plasticity that spontaneously come to one who feels that he has not grown fully and has to develop further.

A "realised person", if I may say so graphically and somewhat strongly, is a finished product to be kept in a glass-case for show in a museum. He is a sample showing what has been done and what could be done. But you do not have there the stuff to do more. I would prefer for my work to have someone who may have little knowledge, but who has much goodwill, a great aspiration, who feels within him this flame, this need to go on. I say, he may know little, he may have realised even less, but here is good material with which one can go far, very far. Besides, there is another point to note. As in mountain-climbing a guide is very useful, even indispensable, who can show you the proper way and make it easy for you to climb higher and higher altitudes, so in spiritual ascension, a guide, if you have the good fortune to meet one, will help you to rise much higher than you could do yourself with your own personal strength and your own personal view of a fixed goal—you are not proud of your discovery and you do not waste time or energy in useless searches and enquiries.

That is why I prefer children—children in body or in soul—and fear grown-ups steeped in erudition and realisation.

The Spiral Universe

EVOLUTION does not proceed in a straight line, but in a spiral. That is to say, it is not a constant progress in one direction, but consists of progression, regression and an ultimate progression. The spiral movement means that all things must enter into the phenomenon of evolution, so that it is not one thing only that progresses and others lag behind but that all move forward—all move forward but at different speeds and also from different starting-points. And they move not straight as the crow flies, but in a circle like the soaring eagle. When you concentrate upon one point of the circle, you will see relatively to it many others not advancing at all but receding and the point itself will seem at times to be going back towards a position already left behind. One goes back to pick up certain elements that have not been included in the progress, not properly dealt with. It happens usually that when you progress in one thing, you forget another; so you have to turn back and take up the neglected element. Thus you have to go round and round, as it were, until you include the totality of your being, even embrace the totality of the universe. When you have, however, gathered the by-passed factor and come back to the original position from where you seemed to have regressed, you find that you are not exactly at the same point but at a corresponding point on a higher plane. That forms a spiral, not merely a circle.

There are, in the universe, an infinite number of points moving, each forming a spiral; so there are an infinite number of spirals. And these spirals do not lie only side by side, but cross each other and thus give an aspect of contrariness and contradictoriness. So if you wish to take a total view of the movement of universal progress, you will be somewhat puzzled.

There are so many lines that advance and there are so many which recede at the same time. Some come into the light, others go into the background and none independent or self-sufficient. There is a sort of intermingling, even coordination.

The universe can thus be conceived as a globe consisting of an infinite number of intersecting spirals. One can give to each spiral a different colour, each representing one aspect of nature's movement. A model globe of this kind may perhaps be constructed. A section only of the curve of a spiral is on the outside, the rest is within the globe and can be seen because of its special colour, provided we consider the globe as something transparent. It is these multiple sections outside that form the surface of the globe. The inside is of course full of spirals, excepting that section of a spiral which is outside. And yet though crossing and recrossing they do not form an opaque mass. One can see through and follow the brilliant lines of various colours. That is how I see it. You can try to make a geometrical figure of it, if possible.

Nature has a plan of its own. It is not like the coherent rational plan of man. Nature's plan is made of an aspiration, a decision and a goal. But the way is quite fantastic, so it appears to man. Nature seems to move from moment to moment, under the stress of the occasion; there are advances, withdrawals, trials, contradictions, demolitions of things, laborious building up, and again throwing down. It is a complete chaos. She begins a thing, leaves it half done, takes up another, rejects one thing altogether, begins anew something left off, makes, remakes, unmakes, separates, mixes up. She follows a million lines of advance at the same time but not from the same point and each with its own speed and rhythm. There is such a tangle that seems to make no sense. Still there is a plan, she pursues an object which seems to be very clear to her, although veiled to the human eye. The spiral globe I spoke of was meant to give some idea of this complex unity in Nature's plan.

You can bring in a better order, with less waste and more efficiency, a more conscious organisation. But for that man must change his own inner organisation first. In his own consciousness and being he must bring out a new order, a new cosmos.

This Expanding Universe

THE universe is a manifestation, that is to say, the unfolding of infinite possibilities. The unfolding has not stopped, it is continuing and will continue, throwing out or bringing into physical expression all that lies behind and latent. The universe may be considered as a sphere or a globe, a totality or assemblage containing everything that exists here and is being manifested. Beyond and outside, as it were, this circle of creation lies the transcendent, the Supreme Divine, in his own status. The transcendent means the unmanifest. It does not mean, however, the void; for it contains all that is to be manifested, each and everything in its potentiality, its essence, in a seed form. All is there as a latent possibility, a fundamental truth of being—all is there not simply as a general idea, but in every detail, though as it were on a microscopic scale, something like the chromosomes in life plasm. The transcendent is beyond time and space. Manifestation or creation begins with the formulation of time and space, the frame in which what lay latent is gradually brought out and displayed. The transcendent is consciousness absorbed in itself, identified with itself; manifestation is consciousness waking and looking at itself as its object (*La prise de conscience objective de soi*).

Now, one can be seated or fixed exclusively in the status of the unmanifest; to such a one the infinite and eternal is an everpresent reality, there is nothing like past or future, everything is. One knows and is in the presence of a fixed actuality; whatever happened, whatever will happen—as it seems to us—all are there realised on the same plane and at the same moment (although the terms plane and moment do not quite apply there). It is the world or status of the absolutely determined. Free choice or indeterminacy, the unexpected and the unforeseen have no place here.

On the contrary, the sphere of manifestation is precisely the field of the sudden and the incalculable, that is to say, of free will. Things appear here that were not before, forces come into play that were not expected or even imagined. They all move along lines that shift and change continually. This is the status of becoming—*sambhuti*, as designated by the Upanishad and described by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, in the words, *panta reei*, everything flows on. Here, often a certain disposition that seems quite stable or predictable is upset all of a sudden by the irruption of a new and novel factor from somewhere else.

But in between the two, on the borderland, as it were, there is a poise of consciousness which combines both in an integral perception, it is a single movement of both being and becoming. It is the Supermind. It is the point where what is or exists in the unmanifest just *becomes* in the manifest, the pure truth or reality above at standstill stirs and begins to come out or disengage itself through a play of possibles. It is like a cinema film that is rolled up and kept in a spool till it is put on the projector and rolled out gradually upon the screen of life and in life-size presentation.

The transcendent then is an integral reality, for it contains all and the whole, but it is of fixed dimension—*avyaya*, it neither increases, nor decreases: it is the Stable, the Stagnant—*sthānuracaloyam*. The cosmos, on the other hand, is not only moving and changing, but also ever increasing or expanding. For new possibles are becoming reals here and adding to the sum of its factors. Out of the transcendent, the unmanifest, are constantly shooting down potentials and becoming dynamic in the universe making it richer and ever richer.

Furthermore, this expansion is not merely accretion but a growth, that is to say, it is directed and has a sense and purpose and end in view. In fact all the possibles that find play, the elements that enter here below are necessary inasmuch as they contribute to the meaning of the Play, to the working out of the dénouement. We can take again the analogy of the cinema film and say that the unrolling film is interesting because it has a continuous and developing story to tell, with a beginning, a middle and an end. Likewise, the manifestation too tells a connected story—it is not a drivel, but has a

goal; it is a process elaborated by a *final cause*. Even like an individual being it is an organism, ever growing and bringing out its latent possibilities, moving towards a high fruition of its aspiration and destiny.

In this sense manifestation is a more complete—and more and more complete—reality than the non-manifest Supreme. The non-manifest, the transcendent is an integral reality, the manifestation a complete reality, since it adds to it its own reality, the actuality of concrete expression.

The World Serpent

THE universe is often conceived as a serpent coiling round and eating itself, the head turning about and swallowing the tail. The image is that of a sphere or globe enclosing the whole existence and that of something without end or beginning, infinite. It also gives the idea of a perpetual lengthening out, that is, constant creation, but at the same time of a turn back: the unrolling of the universe is not in a straight line, but circular.

The universe is however a complex entity. It is not made of only one plane, but consists of many planes superimposed upon each other. Thus at the bottom as the basis is the physical—matter—and at the top as the acme is the most subtle, the spiritual: in between there are gradations whose number varies according to the mode of the outlook.

Reverting to the image of the serpent, one can say that its head represents the spirit, the supreme consciousness, and the tail the other end, matter or supreme unconsciousness. The image, furthermore, gives a graphic picture of the great truth that the extremes meet, the head bends round and catches the tail. Psychologically this means that if one rises higher and higher in consciousness, starting from the body consciousness, traversing Life and Mind and Overmind and reaches the very source, the head and front of consciousness, then, curious to say, one finds oneself all on a sudden landed in the heart of matter. In the occult language this is expressed by saying that the consciousness that shines on the highest peak, is imbedded also here below in the cavern of dead matter. If one rises sufficiently high, rung by rung, to the extreme end of the ladder, one comes round exactly at the point from where one started without having to pass through all the rungs. Con-

versely too if one probes sufficiently deep into the farthest corner of matter, the last limit of inconscience, one comes out into the blaze of the same infinity that covers above and below and around.

One can recall here the curious conclusion reached by some modern scientists in regard to the spherical character of the universe that the universe being an endless bounded plane it is quite likely that a particular star you see in front of you may not at all be situated direct against you, but that it might be sending out rays that have come round the whole sphere and taken you, as it were, from behind!

This Mystery of Existence

HAVE you ever asked yourself why there is this universe at all, at least this earth with which we are so much concerned and which seems to us so real, so authentic? It would perhaps be very wise on your part if you did not! I have often spoken to you of Theon. He was truly a sage in his own way. People used to come to him and ask questions. Many asked why there was a universe. He would answer, "But what is that to you?" Some would ask, "Why is the universe like this?" To that he would say, "It is what it is, how does it matter?" Others again would remark, "I do not consider the world a satisfactory affair." There, we begin to come more to the point. To those who find the world unsatisfactory I would say, "Get to work, try to change it. Find a way that it may be otherwise, that it may be made better." Things are what they are, it is no use speculating over that and getting worried. Seek for the means of remedy, so that things may be made what they should be. Why are things what they are? Not that one cannot know the reason, although one may not always be sure of it. The best thing to do is to take whatever is as it is and try to change it towards that which it ought to be. Now the wonder of it is that if you are sincere, if you want to know sincerely and work sincerely, you will come to know why things are what they are—the cause, the origin and the process, for they are all one. There is one truth at the base of things; if that were not there, nothing would be. If you seize that truth, you seize at the same time the origin of the creation and the means of changing it as well. In other words, if you are in contact with the Divine—for the Divine is that base—you are in possession of the key to all things, you know the why, the how and the process for change. One thing to do then is to start doing the thing.

But you might say, it is too much, too difficult, too big for you—to work in the world or for the world. Well then, start with yourself. You are a little mass of substance, a symbol or representative of the universe. Let your work then be to form and refashion that particle. Concentrate upon it, go within—even within that little person of yourself you will find the long looked-for key.

Record of World-History

ALL that has happened upon earth, everything from the beginning of creation till now, everything without exception has been recorded somewhere in some particular world or region of consciousness. All that man has thought, his researches and discoveries, his findings and conclusions are kept intact, carefully stored. If you want to know anything of the past history of the earth, the happening at a particular time and place, you have simply to transplant yourself into that world and look into the records.

It is a very curious place, something like a vast library. It consists of an infinite number of cells, as it were, each containing all information on a particular subject. They seem to be squares in shape and they remain closed normally. If you have to consult a particular square, you press a button and it opens and out of it comes a roll of written matter. You unroll it and find out what you want. There are millions and millions and millions of these cells and rolls, around, above, everywhere. Fortunately in the mental world you can move anywhere as you like, you do not require lifts and ladders to go up.

The point, however, is how to go there at all. Well, the first thing is that you must completely silence your mind. Mental cogitations, agitations you must leave behind, no thoughts must enter your consciousness, it must be tranquil and still, like a transparent sheet of water or smooth and polished like a mirror. The description I have given of a library is only an image, the real thing is something different. However, you have in this way some idea to go upon. In the silent mind you form a point of consciousness and send it out as an emissary to gather the required information. This point of consciousness must be absolutely detached and free to go as it likes;

for if it were in any way kept tied to the normal movements of your own mind, then you will not go further than what is in your head. You must be able to make your brain a blank, you must have no preconceived notion, no idea that the solution of your problem might lie in this way or that. As I say, your mind has to be a thoroughly blank page, a clean slate, with nothing written on it, no mark even. There should be instead a sincere aspiration to know the truth, without postulating beforehand what kind of truth it might be; otherwise you will meet your own formation in the brain.

You can certainly test and correct the information you get from your inner voyage by outside information, what others have found or what are recorded in books. The inner knowledge need not and should not replace the outer knowledge, but supplement it, both should support and complete each other. But there is a mixture about which you must be very careful. Your silent mind, your inner consciousness receives the necessary knowledge, but as you want to express it or translate in normal terms, that is to say, as your brain gets active again, it may and often does supply its own materials and formations and the original knowledge gets disturbed and distorted. Sometimes what you may do is to dictate most passively the things you see or perceive and let another take down in writing as you proceed. You must say exactly as you see and the other take down exactly as he hears.

It is the image of reading a book that I have given you. But it is, as I said, only an image. What it is really is a kind of perception. And the perception may be in the form of an image, it may be in the form of a narrative. At other times it may be a simple answer to a particular question. There are many kinds and varieties of record, different according to the types or levels of consciousness that you go to.

Naturally the process is not easy and available to everybody, as an ordinary book. It requires a special aptitude and special discipline.

Freedom and Destiny

FROM a certain point of view whatever happens here in the material world is a reproduction or realisation of whatever has already happened or existed on another level of reality. In this world then there would be no free choice, everything being predetermined. From another standpoint, however, one can say with equal truth that the world here is being recreated every moment; it is not a mere replay or flash-back of a past event, a pre-existent phenomenon, but something ever new and fresh. Take, for instance, a material body, of a particular chemical composition, having some well-defined properties; it behaves according to that nature and produces inevitably results deducible from it. Now, if a new element is introduced into the thing at any moment, the whole quality of the composition and its behaviour will undergo a change. Something like that happens in the universe.

The universe is a huge mass of innumerable elements forming a certain composition and in accordance with this composition all are organised within itself. But such an arrangement is not the end or the culmination; it is not static, but moving forward; it is in the process of development. For at any moment, through the action of a different kind, one or more new elements can be introduced into the total mass that forms the universe at a given time and that will necessarily change the whole inner composition. The universe, the material universe, I mean, is a concretisation of a certain aspect or emanation of the Supreme. This concretisation is progressive, not necessarily in a constant and regular way, but in answer to a law, with a subtle kind or degree of liberty. Thus, in the composition of the universe at each moment new elements are penetrating and altering the organisation. The

organisation that was perfect in itself and moved and unrolled itself according to a definite plan and pattern, suddenly finds itself changed and the inner relations too are modified and attain a different poise. That may give the impression of something incoherent or imprecise or miraculous, according to the manner in which one looks at the problem. So there are these two simultaneous facts or factors: there is a determinism which is absolute in its way with a complementary movement of liberty, the unforeseen addition into a fixed existing sum.

This addition comes from the aspiration for the supreme consciousness. There is nothing to wonder at the phenomenon. There is an aspiration acting in the world, moving with a certain end in view; the purpose is to bring back the fallen and obscured consciousness to its original and normal state of the divine consciousness. Each time that this aspiring consciousness meets an obstacle in its working, a new resistance to conquer or to transform, it calls for a new Force. And this new Force is a kind of new creation. In the human being, too, there are different domains in obedience to a law of correspondence; in each there is for him a different destiny and each is absolute in its line. But there is also in him, through his aspiration, a capacity to enter into relation with a domain higher than where he happens to be and bring down an action of this higher domain into the lower determinism. So we can say that there is a horizontal determinism in each domain, absolute in its normal working; but there is also a vertical intervention from other higher domains or even from the highest and then the lower determinism is changed completely. Thus every human being is at once a sum of various determinisms, absolute in their way, and there is also an absolute liberty that can intervene by bringing down other forces into the apparently rigid frame of destiny of the lower worlds and alter it. That is how things in the world give the impression of the unforeseen, the incalculable, the miraculous.

You may call this intervention Grace; for without the Divine Grace this could not happen. There is a consciousness and a vision of things where all are brought back to this single source; Grace only exists, nothing else is there. That does everything. But as you have not risen to that summit, not have

had that extreme realisation, you have to take into account your own person, your personal aspiration, the thing that calls for the Grace and to which the Grace responds. The two are needed here. Both are ultimately ways of viewing the same truth. The mind, however, finds it difficult to conceive both in a simultaneous movement. The rigid distinctions it makes take away much from the supple and subtle and integral truth of a total experience.

The Divine Truth—Its Name and Form

THE divine truth at the heart of things, people have called by all kinds of names, everyone presenting it from his own angle of experience. But always it is the one Reality. There are millions of ways leading towards it; but one thing is certain, you can find it, whatever the way you follow, whatever the form you give it: the result is the same, the final experience is identical. If all have touched the thing, they touch the same thing always. And the proof that they have touched the thing is that it is the same for all; if it is not the same thing, then they have not touched it. You can give it any name you like: a name is only a word.

What is the value of a word, after all? Have you not noticed that there are people who do not understand you, however clearly you speak to them. There are others again who understand you if you utter only two words. The external form—the sound of a word—has a meaning, if there is a force of thought behind; the greater the force of thought, the more powerful and precise and clear it is, and greater the chance of people receiving the force and understanding the word that carries the force. But if someone speaks without thinking, usually it is impossible to understand him; he would seem to you to make only a noise. You must have noticed also that people who have lived together and are habituated to each other's thought and talk, do not require any definition of the words they use or even a large use to understand each other. There has been a mental adjustment and the words are only an excuse for the inner contact, the contact between brain and brain which underlies or even precedes the words.

But when you meet a new person, it takes you time to adapt and adjust yourself to understand the words he uses.

It is the meaning, the thought behind the word that is important. When the thought is powerfully thought, it produces a vibration of which the word is only a carrier, an intermediary. Indeed, you can develop the thought-power to such an extent that you are able to establish a direct material contact with the minimum or even no words at all. Naturally this requires a strong power of concentration. But you will find that the bodily mechanism is only a mechanical means; it is an instrument, but not always important or indispensable.

When we are conscious of the Divine, do we see Him in all things in some particular form?

You expect to see a divine form in each and all things? It may happen so. But I am not sure; I have the impression that there is a large part of imagination in such experiences. You may, for example, see the form of Krishna or Christ or Buddha in every being or thing. But I say that much of human conception enters into this perception. Otherwise what I was telling you just now would not be true. I said all who have the consciousness of the Divine, all who get the contact with the Divine, wherever one may be, to whatever age or country he may belong, all have the same essential experience. If it were not so, the Hindus would always see one of their gods, the Europeans one of theirs, the Japanese a third variety and so on. This may be an addition of each one's own mental formation, but it would not be the Reality in its essence or purity which is beyond all form. One can have a perception of the Divine Presence, a very concrete perception, one can have even a personal contact with the Divine, but it need not happen in and through the kind of form you imagine; it is something inexpressible, beyond all explanation or definition, it is evident only to one who has the experience. It may be as you are suddenly lifted up into a peculiar condition, you find yourself in the presence of the Divine which takes a form familiar to you, a form you have been accustomed to associate with the Divine, because of your education, your upbringing and tradition. But, as I say, it is not the supreme

essence of the experience: the form gives after all a limitation to the experience, takes away from it its universality and a large measure of its power.

The Symbolic Ignorance

How can there be dark spots in the light of the full consciousness (the Mother's consciousness)? The darkness is only relative and depends upon the degree or status of consciousness. At the outset, on lower and narrower ranges, the light is dim and hedged in: it is surrounded by a much greater and denser area of darkness. As the consciousness grows, that is to say, manifests itself, as it rises and widens, the obscurity too recedes more and more and slowly fades away. This consciousness is not personal, but something impersonal. In other words, it holds within itself the universe including especially the earth. And earth is a dark object; it is made of ignorance and unconsciousness. The light envelops it and only gradually penetrates and transforms it. The Mother's consciousness is thus the representative consciousness; it represents all that is yet unconscious and striving secretly without knowing towards consciousness; it is also at the same time the light itself that acts and transforms. The divine consciousness embodied acting upon itself thus symbolises and embodies its action upon what would be viewed as others.

Diseases and Accidents

If the body is ill, does the mind too fall ill?

NOT necessarily, to be sure. Illnesses are, as I have told you, generally a dislocation among the different parts of the being, a kind of disharmony. It may well be that the body has not followed the movement of progress, it might have lagged behind while the other parts have, on the contrary, made progress. In that case there is an unbalance, a breaking of harmony and that produces an illness, I mean, in the body, for the mind and the vital also might remain all right. There are many people who have been ill for years, suffering from terrible and incurable diseases, and still maintained their mental power marvellously clear and active and continuing to make progress in that domain. There was a French poet, a very good poet, named Sully Prudhomme; he was mortally ill and it was during that time that he wrote his most beautiful poems. He was always in a very good humour, charming, smiling, pleasant to everyone even while his body was going to bits. You may remember how the great Louis XIV used to joke and laugh, while, in his last days, his body was being lacerated and given over to leeches by his doctors and surgeons. It depends upon individual and individual. For there are people of the other type who get thoroughly disturbed from head to foot if there is the slightest bodily indisposition. Each one has his own combination of the elements.

There is of course a relation between the mind and the body, quite a close relation. In most cases it is the mind that makes the body ill, at least it is the most important factor in the illness. I have said, there are people who keep their mind clear although their body suffers. But it is very rare and very difficult

to keep the body healthy when the mind suffers or is unbalanced. It is not impossible, but very, very exceptional. For I explained to you that it is the mind which is the master of the body, the body is an obedient and obliging servant. Unfortunately, one does not usually know how to make use of one's mind, not only so, one makes bad use of it and as bad as possible. The mind possesses a considerable power of formation and of direct action on the body. It is precisely this power which is used by people to make their body ill. As soon as there is something which does not go well, the mind begins to worry about it, makes formations of coming catastrophes, indulges in all kinds of imaginary dangers ahead. Now, instead of thus letting the mind run amuck and play havoc, if the same energy were used for a better purpose, if good formations were made, namely, giving self-confidence to the body, telling it that there is nothing to be anxious about, it is only a passing unease and so on, in that case, the body would be put in a right condition of receptivity and the illness pass away quietly even as it came. That is how the mind is to be taught to give good suggestions to the body and not to throw mud into it. Marvellous results follow if you do it properly.

When an accident happens there is in it a critical moment. For example, you slip and you fall. Now between the moment when you slip and the moment when you fall, there is just a fraction of a second when you are, as it were, given the choice. It can either be nothing or something very serious. Only to make the choice you must have a perfectly awakened consciousness and your being must be constantly in contact with the psychic. There is no time to bring in the contact, one must already be in contact. So, just between the slip and the fall, if the mental and psychic formation is sufficient, you come out unscathed. If, on the contrary, the body thinks, as it is its habit, "Oh, I have slipped" and becomes apprehensive—it is, as I say, a matter of a fraction of a second, even less—then the catastrophe happens. You have the capacity to prevent an accident happening, you are given the choice at a momentary moment. But for that you must learn to be wide awake, to be fully conscious. When you are in that condition you can prevent an accident, you can stop an illness coming into you. But it is just the matter of a split second and you must not miss it.

And yet there is still another moment. When you have fallen and are already hurt, you have still now the open chance whether it will turn well or ill, whether it will stop at being just a mishap or become something really serious or as serious as possible. I do not know if you have noticed that there are certain people who do not seem to miss any occasion for an accident. Every time there is a possibility, they have it. And the accident is never slight, it tends to be serious and often very serious. People say, what an unlucky fellow! Chance is never on his side! etc., etc. But all that is sheer ignorance. Everything depends absolutely upon the working of the consciousness. I could cite any number of instances and such striking ones. There are people who might have been killed but came out of the accident safe and sound. There are others for whom what was quite harmless in the beginning turns worse and worse and proves in the end, perhaps, fatal.

But you must understand it is not the working of thought, ordinary thought. The thought may be as good in one as in the other. It all depends upon the moment of choice. There are people who know to react in the right manner and at the right moment. It is the character that matters. Such people have a wakeful, alert consciousness; they are not asleep, they are on the watch constantly within themselves. And at the right moment they call for the aid, they invoke the divine force, yes, exactly at the right moment. And the danger is warded off. On the other hand, whenever there is something going wrong, some dislocation in the being, if you are seized by fear, dark foreboding or defeatism in the consciousness, then you are done for.

It is not the mind, as I say, which decides. It is an inner attitude, a poise of the being, the right consciousness which reacts in the right manner. Its effect goes very far. You do not know what a power it is. Even if it is there just for a fraction of a second, it works miracles. Only it must be there already, you must be already in the state of wakefulness, you cannot order it at the moment, you have no time.

You may say again that it is the Divine Grace that saves. But would you explain to me how it works? It would be interesting, indeed, to find out who had precisely the awakened consciousness, had the faith and the inner trust, had called

for the help and had in him that which answered automatically—and even in a way unconsciously—to something that came in. Human intelligence is a relative thing and has varying degrees of power. Usually it understands by contrasts and contraries. It does not understand a truth in its absoluteness. For example, I have received hundreds of letters thanking me because they were saved from dangers. But I do not remember to have received a letter thanking me because things were normal and nothing had happened. Men perceive the action of Grace only when there is the atmosphere of the pessimist and there is a danger and they had escaped from it, that is to say, when there is already the beginning of the accident, when the accident has come to pass. When they come out of the danger safely only then they take note of the force that saved. Otherwise they would not have even thought of it. If the voyage they undertook came off without any accident they would not think of any action of Grace present there. They would take it as a matter of course. But precisely because it is so, there may be acting here a Grace of a higher order and there may be existing already a deeper pre-existent harmony between the consciousness of the person and the higher force to which it responds. The chance of an accident is already the beginning of the dislocation I spoke of. But the situation becomes complicated if it is a case of collective accident. The result here depends upon the atmosphere of the persons involved. It is the proportion of these two elements in the personnel of a collective accident that determines the character and magnitude of the accident.

I will tell you a story, I mean a true story, in this connection. There was a pilot who was considered what is called an *ace* among his fellowmen in the first Great War. He was an extraordinary aviator and the hero of many victories. Nothing had happened to him at any time. But towards the end of his life, an event occurred—some private tragedy—and all at once he had the feeling that something was going to happen to him; an accident perhaps, and it was all finished with him. He had come out of the war but was still in the army. He wanted to make a flight to South Africa, from France right up to the south of Africa. He started from France and made for Madagascar, so far as I remember, and then wanted to fly back to

France. Now, my brother was at that time the Governor of Congo and needed to join his post as soon as possible. He asked for a place in the aeroplane of the pilot I am speaking about. It was not a regular service plane, but one of those used for trial to show what the machines were capable of and the skills of the airmen. Many tried to dissuade my brother from making the journey, saying that these adventurous trips were always dangerous. My brother however did not mind the risk. Nothing serious happened, but for a slight breakdown in the middle of the Sahara which was easily got over, and the plane made safe journey and dropped him at his place in Congo. The plane continued further down, to Madagascar, as I said. Now the pilot started back, he did half the journey, his plane crashed and he was killed forthwith. I shall explain to you what really the matter was. What happened had to happen, it was a foregone conclusion. My brother had an absolute faith in his destiny, a certainty that nothing would touch him. The consciousness of the other was on the contrary full of doubt and apprehension. So the mixture of the two atmospheres brought about this that in the first instance the accident could not be prevented, but it stopped short of a catastrophe. But once the destiny of my brother was not there with the machine,—like Caesar's destiny that made the boatman row safely across the river through a storm—the protection was also withdrawn and the pilot had to go down under the full blast of his bad fate. I can narrate another analogous story, it is with regard to a ship. There were two persons, husband and wife. They went by air to Indo-China. They had an accident, a very serious accident. All were killed except only these two. Now they had to return to France. They did not want to travel by air, they had had an experience of it. So they took a boat, I mean a ship, which they thought would be quite safe. Now what happened was absolutely unexpected, quite extraordinary. In the middle of the Red Sea, in broad daylight, the ship struck against a reef and sank—a thing that does not happen even once perhaps in a million cases. All the passengers were drowned except, miraculous again to say, the couple. There are people like that—they carry misfortune with them, but the misfortune is for others, they themselves escape somehow.

If you look at the thing in an ordinary way, you do not notice it. But the fact is there. You must be very careful about your associations. An unfortunate association may prove disastrous to you. The *karma* of others may fall upon you, unless you have the inner knowledge, the vision and the necessary power. If you see a person with something like a dark whirl around avoid him at all cost. The moral of it all is that it is very useful to look into things a little more deeply than to observe the surface only.

The Problem of Evil

God has created the world, the material world as it is? Yes and No, more "No" than "Yes". For he has not created it directly. There have been many creators, rather *formateurs*, form-makers, in between the world and God, who joined in the work of creation. Who are they? They have been given various names. Creation generally follows a principle of gradation. It is done step by step, world rising out of world successively. Each world is a particular state of being, a particular mode of consciousness. Each state is inhabited by entities, individualities, personalities and each one has created a world around him or assisted in the creation of certain types or species upon earth. The last of these creators or fashioners are those of the vital. At the top are those of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind. It was these that created, that is to say, gave the first forms to earthly beings and things. They sent out their emanations and these again theirs in their turn and so on. Thus it was not the Divine Will which acted directly upon Matter and gave the world the form it could or should have had. There are layers and planes, graded intermediaries through which the Will has had to act. I spoke of the overmental and the vital plane. There is also the mental plane between them. There are mental beings who are also creators, giving form to some beings that have taken body upon earth.

Thus, there is a tradition which says that the world of insects is the outcome of the creators of the vital world. That is why when you see the insects under a microscope they take on appearances that are absolutely diabolical. Enlarged on a screen they look like veritable monsters, so terrifying they are. Microscopic monsters they are. So it is said, beings of the vital world thought of amusing themselves and created these

impossible beasts making human existence uncomfortable.

You can of course ask how these intermediaries themselves came into being, not out of the Divine? Intermediaries come out of other still higher and higher intermediaries till the chain reaches the Supreme. Originally, that is to say, if you trace back to the original source, there is there, of course, only the Divine. Then how has the deformation come in? I explained to you once that if you do not remain one with the Divine, under his direct influence, do not follow the movement of creation or expansion exactly as the Divine wills, this rupture of contact is sufficient to bring about the greatest evil of all, division. Even the most luminous, the most powerful beings may decide to follow their own movement instead of obeying the divine movement. They may be in themselves marvellous beings, and human beings, if they saw them, would take them for the Divine himself, yet they can, since they follow their own will and work not in harmony with the universe, be the source of the greatest disorders. There is nothing that is not the Divine, only there comes about a disorder, that is to say, each thing is not in its proper place. The problem is, how this is to be remedied.

As to the question why this deviation, this evil at all, I can say, first of all, what you call evil may be only what is not convenient to you, but from the standpoint of universal arrangement that may be the most convenient. Secondly, the thing might have been just an accident, so to say, in the beginning. And what we are concerned with is not so much its why or even how but with the remedy to be found for the evil that is there. Viewing philosophically, however, we may note that the universe in which we live is evidently one movement out of many (actual and possible), that it follows its own law which is not the same elsewhere, that if the principle on which this universe has been created is that of free will, then you cannot prevent the disorderly movement from taking place until a knowledge comes and illumines the choice. If one is free to choose, one may choose the wrong thing, not necessarily the right thing, for if it were decided beforehand that the choice must be always good and in the right direction, then the choice would no longer be free.

But in reality these questions cannot be adequately answered

in that way. It is a problem to which mental answers—of which the mental formulations even—only serve to diminish the dimensions of the problem; the question itself reduces the problem to a more or less elementary formula corresponding only vaguely and superficially and incompletely to the reality of things.

To be able to understand you must become. If you want to understand the why and the how of the universe you must identify yourself with the universe. And that is not easy.

In truth, the question itself is wrong. It is childish. It presupposes things that are themselves questionable. There are certain ideas about creation which have been almost universally current, more or less permanently accepted by human thought during ages; they are of an astounding simplicity. There is a world here, it is said, and up there somewhere there is a being called God. This person one day thought of creating some kind of thing, a visible form. The world was the result. Evidently we see a lot of mistakes in his work. We conclude the creator perhaps is a well-meaning benevolent person, but not all-powerful; some other thing or being there is that contradicts him. Or perhaps he is all-powerful but then has no heart and must be cruelty itself—viewing the condition of his creation which is a story of sorrow and trouble and misery. Such an idea, I say, is simplicity itself, the simplicity of a child brain. When one speaks of God the creator as a potter making a pot, one thinks of him as a human being, only in bigger proportions. Truly, it is not God who has made man in his image, it is man who has made God in his image.

As I say, the question is wrongly put. The very form of the question already assumes a certain notion about God and creation. Your postulates or axioms themselves are vitiated.

The universe and its creator are not separate things, they are one and identical in their origin. The universe is God himself projected into Space (and Time). So the universe is the Divine in one aspect or another. You cannot divide the two, making one the creator and the other, his work, the watchmaker and his watch. You put your idea of the Divine upon him and ask, why he has created such a nasty world. If the Divine were to answer, "It is not I, it is yourself. Become myself again, you will no longer feel and see as you do now.

you are not yourself, therefore your question and your problem!" Indeed, when you unite your consciousness with the divine consciousness there is no longer any problem. Everything appears then natural and simple, and correct and as it should be. It is when you cut yourself from your origin and stand outside, in front of him and against him that all the trouble begins. Of course you may ask, how is it that the Divine has tolerated a part of himself going out and separating itself and creating all this disorder? I would reply on behalf of the Divine, "If you want to know, you had better unite yourself with the Divine, for that is the only way of knowing why he has done so. It is not by questioning him by your mind that you will get the answer. The mind cannot know. And repeat, when you come to this identification, all problems are solved. The feeling, one can explain, that things are not all right, that they should be otherwise comes precisely from the fact that there is a divine will unfolding itself in a continuous progression, that things that were and are have to give place to things that shall be and shall be better and better than they have been. The world that was good yesterday will no longer be so tomorrow. The universe might have appeared quite harmonious in some other age but now appears quite discordant: it is because we see the possibility of a better universe. If we found it as it should be, we would not do what we have to do, we would not try to make it better. Even so, we would conceive the Divine in a very human way; for we remain imprisoned within ourselves, confined to this consciousness of ours which is like a grain of sand in the infinite immensity. You want to understand the immensity? That is not possible. It is possible only under one condition; be one with the immensity. The drop of water cannot very well ask how the ocean is: it has to lose itself into the ocean."

This Ugliness in the World

EVERYTHING in the world has at its source a supreme truth, how is it then that the world has become ugly in its expression? Why are things at all ugly? Because there are other things that intervene between the Source and the manifestation. For example, if I asked you: "Do you know your true being?" what would you say? You do not know; it would be wonderful if you did. It is the same with all beings and things. And yet you are already a sufficiently developed being, a thinking being, and have gone through many stages of refinement; you are not quite the lizard crawling on the wall! Still you cannot tell what is the truth of your being. That is the secret of the deformation in the world. It is because there is all the unconsciousness—the Inconscient—that has been created by the fact of separation from one's origin. It is this inconscience which prevents the Source from manifesting in its own nature, although it is there always. It is there, therefore that all things exist, the world exists; but in its expression it is deformed, because it has to manifest itself through inconscience, through ignorance and obscurity. But how did it come about? The will to create was originally a will that projected itself towards individual formation; what it arrived at, however, was not the true individual (or individualisation) but a breaking up of the solid unity into infinitesimal fragments. The original indivisible unity became a sum of infinitely divided unities. These unities or units were individualisations of things separate and feeling and acting as such. It is precisely the feeling of separation from others that gives you the impression that you are an individual. Otherwise you would feel that you were only a fluid mass. That is to say, you are no longer conscious simply of your rigid outer form and all that cuts you off from

others and makes of you a separate individual, you are conscious of the vital forces that move about everywhere, of the inconscient that is the foundation of all, you have the impression that you are a moving mass with all kinds of contradictory movements in it, which cannot be separated from each other. You would not have the impression that you are an individual being, but that you are something like one note or vibration in a whole complex. The original will was to form individual beings capable of becoming conscious again of their divine origin. This process of individualisation created the necessity that to be an individual one must feel oneself separate: that is why one is cut off from the original consciousness, at least apparently, and is fallen into inconscience. For the Life of life is the Origin alone and if it is separated from that source, consciousness naturally turns into unconsciousness and you lose trace of the truth of your being. That is the process of the creation or formation of the world by which the pure origin does not manifest directly in its essence and purity, but through deformation, that is to say, unconsciousness and ignorance. That is how ugliness came in, death and disease, wickedness and misery and all. It is the movement, I say, brought in by the necessity of individual formation that has produced these things, each and every one of them, that is the one source of the multiple evil in all its modes and vibrations. I do not say this was indispensable—that problem I may take up later on. But for the moment I direct you to the source in order to show the remedy. And there is no point in questioning why it is so. As I said, the only way to settle the world problem is to be conscious again, to recover the lost consciousness. Of course, if you say like some religions that good is good and evil is evil and they will always remain so, then there is no longer any problem. An eternal struggle binds the two together and whichever wins for the moment will make the world a little better at one moment and a little worse at another. But the two exist, continue to exist eternally and indissolubly intertwined. But you have seen it is not like that; one can come out of the tangle into the perfect unity of the truth, for it is that which is the only and original source.

It is this perfect truth, let me repeat, that has scattered itself abroad, into these innumerable little atoms, into these

insignificant brain cells which, in spite of all their ignorance, are still moved by a secret stir of consciousness: these little specks of darkness reach out towards light which they can find, for it is within them. They will arrive at what they seek. It may take time more or less, but they will reach in the end. That is then the remedy: it lies in the very heart of evil itself.

Divine Justice

Why do people receive force from the Divine even when He knows that they are not sincere?

You must understand once for all that the Divine, when he acts is not moved by human notions. Possibly he does things even without what we call reason. In any case the reasons are not of the human kind; above all, the Divine has not that sense of justice which man has. For example, when you see a man full of greed for money, trying to cheat people just for the sake of getting a few rupees, your idea of justice cries out that such a man should be deprived of all money, he must be reduced to poverty. But actually you find things happening to the contrary. Although that is only the appearance of the situation; behind there is an altogether different picture. The greedy gets the object of his greed, but he has to make an exchange, give up some other possibilities. He gets money but he loses in his consciousness. And then it also happens very often that when he does get what he desired so much, he finds himself not so happy, generally he is even less happy than before: he is tormented by the wealth he has gained. You must not judge things by apparent success or by apparent failure. One can say, on the whole, that the Divine gives what one asks for and that is the best way in which one gets his lesson. If your desire is ignorant, unconscious, obscure, selfish, you increase in yourself ignorance, unconsciousness, obscurity and selfishness, that is to say, you move away more and more from truth and consciousness and happiness, in other words, away from the Divine. For the Divine, however, there is only one thing which is true, the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Union. Each time you put material things in front of you, you

become more and more material, you push behind more and more the Divine. To the eye of the ignorant you may have all the appearance of wonderful success, but this success, from the standpoint of truth, is a terrible defeat, you have bartered truth for falsehood.

To judge by appearances, by apparent success is an act of complete ignorance. Even in the case of a person hardened to the core, who has apparently the utmost success, there is a counterpart: exactly this hardening, this evil that is put up thicker and thicker between the outer consciousness and the inner truth becomes also more and more unbearable. The outer success has to be paid for very dearly. One must be very great, very pure, one must have a very high, very unselfish spiritual consciousness to be able to succeed and yet not be affected. There is nothing so difficult to bear than success. That is the true test in life. When you are not successful, you turn very naturally to yourself, go within you, seek there comfort for the outer failure. And they who have the Flame within them and the Divine helping them truly, that is to say, if they are mature enough to get the help, if they are ready to follow the path, must expect blows coming upon them one after another, because that helps. Indeed that is the most powerful, most direct and most effective help. But if you have success, take care! Ask yourself, at what price you have had it? What is the thing you have paid for the success? Of course, there are people of a different kind. They who have gone beyond, who are conscious of their soul, who are entirely surrendered, they can succeed and success does not touch them. But one has to rise very high to be able to shoulder the burden of success. It is perhaps the last and final test that the Divine puts to anyone. He says: "Now that you are noble and high and unselfish, you belong to Me alone. I shall make you triumph. We shall see if you can bear the blow!"

To the Asuras too the Divine gives what they ask for. Generally it is in that way that their end comes all the sooner. An Asura is a conscious being. He knows that he has an end. He knows that the attitude he has taken in this universe will necessarily destroy him after a time. Of course the Asura's time is much longer than human time. Even then he knows that there will come an end for him, for he has cut himself

from Eternity. What he seeks is to carry out his desires to the utmost extent possible till the day of his doom, when the final defeat comes. And very possibly if he is allowed his way the defeat will be hastened. That is why exactly when great things are about to happen, at that moment the adverse forces become the most active, most violently active and apparently the most successful. They are given a free field as it were to rush to their doom.

The Divine Suffering

GENERALLY speaking, when one is unhappy, it is one more suffering added to the collective suffering of the Divine. The Divine acts upon Matter in a state of deep compassion: this compassion is translated in Matter and is figured there by what we call Psychic Sorrow. It is, as it were, a reversed image of the original reality.

The Divine's compassion, translated in the individual physical consciousness, becomes a sorrow that is not egoistic, a sorrow that is an expression of one's identification with the universal sorrow through sympathy. I have described the experience at some length in one of the Prayers and Meditations. I spoke there of "the sweetest tears that I shed in life"; for those tears were not for my sake, I was not weeping for myself. In almost every case man grieves for egoistic reasons, in the human way. Whenever anyone loses a person he loves, he suffers and weeps, not over the condition of the person: in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred or even more, people do not know in what condition the person gone may be, do not and cannot know if the person is happy or unhappy, if he is suffering or is in peace. It is the sense of separation that causes the grief, the feeling that he will not be with them any more which they so much wish. At the root of all human sorrow, there lies this return upon one's own self, more or less conscious, more or less admitted. But when you feel unhappy for the unhappiness of others, there comes in a mixture. That is to say, to your personal grief is added a psychic element which I described as the reversed image of the Divine Compassion. Now, if you can distinguish between the two, the personal anguish and the disinterested sorrow, come out of what is egoistic and concentrate upon the divine element, make yourself one with it, then you

can in that way come in contact with the great universal compassion, which is something immense, vast, calm, mighty, profound, which is perfect peace and infinite Bliss. If you know then how to enter into your suffering, go down to the very bottom of it, pass beyond the portion that is egoistic and personal, go farther on, then you arrive at the door of a wonderful revelation. Not that you should seek suffering for the sake of the suffering and in order to have the experience; but when it is there, when it has come upon you, then try what I have suggested, cross the border, the barrier of egoism in your suffering: note first where is the egoistic part, what is it that makes you suffer, what is the egoistic reason of your suffering, then step across and beyond, towards something universal, towards a greater principle. You enter then into the vast, the infinite compassion, the door of the Psychic opens for you. If, in that domain, you see me in tears, as you say you did in your dream, then you can identify yourself with me at the moment, enter into those tears as it were, melt into them. That will open the door and it will bring you an experience, a very unique experience that leaves always a deep mark upon the consciousness. It is never blotted out altogether even if the door closes again and you become once more what you are in your ordinary movements. That experience, that mark remains behind and you can recall it, go back to it, refer to it in your moments of concentration. You feel then the immensity of an infinite sweetness, a great peace, pervading all your being, it is not in your thought only; it goes out and sympathises with everything and can cure everything.

Only you must sincerely wish, you must have the will, to be cured. Everything lies there. Now I always come back to the same theme. You must be sincere. If you want an experience for the sake of the experience and, once you have it, to go back to your ordinary ways, that will not do. You must sincerely will to be cured—cured precisely of the ordinary ways—you must have the aspiration, the true aspiration to overcome the obstacle, to mount up and up, above and beyond yourself, so that you may drop all that pulls you back, drags you down, to break all limits, clarify and purify yourself, rid yourself of all that lies in your way. If you have this will, the true intense will not to fall back into past errors, to rise out of obscurity

and ignorance towards the light, shorn of all that is human, too human—too small, too ignorant—then that will and that aspiration shall act, act gradually, strongly and effectively bringing you a complete and definitive result. But beware, there must be nothing that clings to the old movements, that does not declare itself but hides its head and when the occasion is opportune puts up its snout.

So I say you must be truly sincere, very truly. If you discover anything clutching, sticking somewhere in the depths, you must be ready to pluck it out, wholly erase it and see no mark of it is left behind. Yes, sometimes you repeat your mistakes. You repeat till your suffering becomes too acute to bear and compels you to be sincere in spite of yourself as it were. But you need not try that line. It is a method, but a bad method: bad, because it destroys so many things, wastes so much energy, leaves such wrong vibrations. In the intensity of your suffering you do discover the will towards perfect sincerity. But you can be sincere also in less arduous and torturous a way.

There is a moment in the life of everyone, there is a moment when this need of perfect sincerity comes as a matter of ultimate choice. There is a moment in the life of the individual and there is a moment in the life of the group also to which the individual belongs, when that choice has to be made, the final purification has to be performed. It is a question then almost of life and death, the progress has to be made if one is to survive.

Divine Disgust

It is a "disgust" filled with all compassion. It is something which takes upon itself the wrong vibrations in others to cure them. Instead of throwing a wrong movement back upon the wrong doer in a spirit of cold justice, it draws it within itself, absorbs it in order to eliminate it or transform it, reducing as much as possible its material consequences. You know the ancient legend of Shiva who has a dark patch upon his throat, because he swallowed all the poison of the world: it is a figure of divine disgust.

Naturally, the poison will not have the same effect upon the Divine as upon man. For there is an essential difference between a state of ignorance and a state of knowledge. Something untoward happens to you in your normal state of ignorance, it has a certain character and brings mentally certain results: but the same thing happening to you in a state of knowledge will not carry the same effect. For example, take a very material thing, a blow, a right royal physical blow, well, if you are in a state of inconscience and ignorance, as you usually are, you will have to suffer the full consequence which in its turn depends wholly upon the force of the blow, who or what gave the blow and the helplessness of the object. But the same blow delivered in the same way by the same agent but upon a being who is conscious and full of knowledge, will produce instantly a reaction reducing the natural consequences to a minimum, even annulling the consequences altogether; for the reaction here is a reaction of knowledge, of light and not that of ignorance, of obscurity. On the moral level the action can be clearly noticed. For example, you can receive an emotional shock, not in egoistic blindness, that is to say, identifying yourself with it or drowned in it; you can hold it

away from you, look at it in an objective manner, see what it is, note the nature of its vibration, etc., etc., and then you put the light of your knowledge, the ultra-violet ray, as it were, of truth upon it. As a result, there comes a new disposition, the shock loses its effectivity. Even so, the physical result of a physical blow can be obviated. If that were not possible what would be the utility of the Divine taking upon himself the evil thing. Evil would continue in the same way and the world continue suffering in the same way. Precisely because the obscure vibrations are transformed into vibrations of light in the divine consciousness that the Divine takes upon and within himself all the ills of the world.

In the case of the physical occurrence, the knowledge I speak of is the inner knowledge of the body cells, their existence, composition, distribution and the knowledge of the consequences of the blow, its natural and expected effects. Also at the same time there should be the knowledge of what the cells should be like, how they ought to react to the blow. And the procedure adopted too is quite different from that of physical Nature which takes hours, days, months to repair a damage; the inner knowledge can do the thing immediately. This inner knowledge can be brought down from its highest source. Instead of the mere psychological knowledge, one can call down the supramental knowledge and focus it upon the part of the body endangered. If the elements of the body, the cells come under the influence of the force of truth and receive it, then there can be an immediate new ordering of the elements according to the higher law. That will bring about not only the cure from the blow received, the mending of the accident, but initiate a big progress in the general consciousness. This power to command the consciousness has no limit. If you have committed an error, even a grave error, and if you can yet call upon the consciousness of truth, this power of the supramental and allow it to work, it will give you an occasion to make a formidable progress. In other words, never be discouraged if you have blundered, blundered even more than once. Only you must keep your will firm, and take sometimes the unshakable resolution not to repeat. Rest assured you will in the end triumph over your difficulty.

Things Significant and Insignificant

ALL things are insignificant in ordinary life. The thoughts you think, the actions you do, the feelings you experience, all your movements have no significance at all, they possess no value. They belong to the superficial part of your being, they come and pass away, like ripples on the sea, leaving no trace or effect in the depths. Only at a rare moment, if ever you come in contact with a corner of your soul, if something of that inmost consciousness touches or gazes at any limb of yours, that flash of a moment is the only significant thing that happens in the midst of all the useless mass that is your life. This is the only precious point and the rest a world of rubbish. To make your life significant, to give it its true meaning and value, you must then draw back from the surface trivialities and look for something else behind. You must go very deep indeed if things are to cease being insignificant.

Why Do We Forget Things?

THERE are many reasons, of course. First and the most important is that we use the faculty of "memory" in order to remember. Memory is a mental instrument depending upon the formation and growth of the brain. Your brain is developing constantly unless, of course, it is already degenerating; the development can continue for a long time, longer than that of the body. In the process there are necessarily things replaced by others; and as the instrument grows, elements that were useful in one state are no longer so in a subsequent state and have to give place to others more suitable. The net result of our acquisitions remains there in essence, but all that had led to it, the intermediary steps are suppressed. Indeed, a good memory means nothing more than that—that is to say, to remember the results only, so that the fundamentals are sifted and stored, namely, those alone that are useful for further construction. This is more important than just trying to retain some particular items in a rigid manner.

There is another thing. Apart from the fact that memory by itself in its very nature is a defective organ, there is the other fact that there are different states of consciousness one following another. Each state faithfully records the phenomena of that moment, whatever they may be. Now, if your mind is calm and clear, wide and strong, you can by concentrating your consciousness on that moment bring out of it and recall in your present active state what is recorded there of your movements then; you can, that is to say, go back to the particular state of consciousness at a given moment and live it again. What is registered in your consciousness is never obliterated and hence not really forgotten. You can live a thousand years and you will not have forgotten that. There-

fore, if you do not want to forget a thing, you must retain it through your consciousness, and not through your mental memory. As I have said, the mental memory fades away, new things, things of today replace old things, things of yesterday. But that of which you are *conscious* in your consciousness, you can never forget. It lies somewhere in the background, returns to you at your bidding. You have only to withdraw to that state of the consciousness where it lies imbedded. In this way you can recall things that you knew perhaps centuries ago. It is how you remember your past lives. For, a movement of consciousness never dies out, it is only the impressions on the surface brain-mind that are fugitive. What you have learnt with this superficial instrument laboriously—only read, heard, noted, underlined—leaves no lasting mark, but what is imbibed, breathed in into the stuff of consciousness remains. The brain is being constantly renewed and reformed. Old cells, cells that have become weak and atrophied are replaced by younger and stronger ones or the old cells combine differently or enter into other organisations. Thus the old impressions or memories they carried are obliterated.

It is, as I say, by entering into a previous state of consciousness where you experienced a thing that you can always call back the thing. Only you must know how to get at the point, submerged somewhere in the depths. The body, after death, dissolves, the greater part of the vital and the mind dissolves also—only a small portion that has been well organised, given a compact cohesive form endures. Such an achievement is a rare phenomenon. But it is otherwise with the consciousness. Consciousness is eternal. If you contact the consciousness you discover the whole mystery of the earth and creation. It is consciousness that can create.

How to get Rid of Troublesome Thoughts

THERE are several ways and also it depends upon the case. The first and the easiest way is to think of something else. Concentrate your attention upon a subject which has nothing to do with what troubles you. You can read something interesting or take up a work that demands care and consideration. Something creative would be more effective; writers and artists, for example, when they are engaged in their particular occupation forget everything else, their whole mind is engrossed in that one matter. But, of course, once the work is done, the trouble begins again, if one has not learnt to control the thoughts in the meanwhile. So there is the second method which is a little more difficult. You have to learn a movement of rejection. As you reject or throw away a physical object, even so you must throw away and reject the thought. It is more difficult, but if you succeed, it is more effective. You have to practise and continue the endeavour, repeat and persevere and there is no reason why you should not succeed, if you are thoroughly sincere and serious.

There is a third method. It is to bring down from above a greater light which is in its nature the very opposite of the thoughts you are dealing with, opposite in a very radical and deep sense; that is to say, if the thoughts that trouble you are obscure and ignorant, especially if they happen to rise from the subconscious or the inconscient, supported by the mere instincts, then, by calling down the light from above and turning it upon the dark thoughts you can simply dissolve them or transform them, wherever possible. It is the supreme means, but perhaps not within the easy reach of all. But if

you succeed in it, not only the thoughts do not come, their very cause is removed. The first method is to turn aside, the second to face and fight, the third to rise above and transform. In the third you are not only cured, but you make a progress—a true progress.

Bad Thought-Formation

A BAD thought is a bad act. You may not know it, but an evil thought is truly an evil act. If you think ill of a man and wish him ill, you are responsible for the mishaps that may befall him to the same degree as when you do him an ill turn. Unfortunately, an evil thought is not a recognised crime and nobody intervenes when you think ill. Not only so, there are a good many people who consider it a play to excite wicked thoughts in others. They do so (innocently, they think) sometimes through sheer stupidity, more often through vanity, through an air of self-importance for having said something interesting.

When you have a bad thought, you make an evil formation and you carry it about you or throw it out. It happens sometimes that when you pass by a man, you suddenly feel unwell, you may not connect the two and you may know nothing of the matter, but in fact the man may have been entertaining an evil thought and it has pounced upon you.

When you find out the cause, then what you have to do is to chase it away, as if it were a fly. The flies are sometimes very troublesome, the more you drive them away the more they come and take it as an amusing game. But if you are serious and have the will, you succeed in driving them out. In the same manner when an evil formation seeks to possess or touch you, push it away immediately, push it away again and again till it disappears.

Why should there be a bad will at all, you ask?

You go into the very origin of things. Why are there inconscience, ignorance and obscurity? You ask for the why and wherefore of the universe. Why is creation like this and not

otherwise? Everyone has explained in his own way. The philosophers have done so, the scientists have done so on different lines. But, none has found the way out. You ask why there is bad will, but the truly interesting and important thing is to find a means whereby there would be no bad will. What is the use of asking why there is pain and suffering and misery, unless it is to find out the remedy? If you look for the why, you may find as many explanations as you like, each may be useful in a way, but none leads you anywhere, except into a blind alley.

There are many things in the world you do not approve of. Some people who, as they put it, wish to have the knowledge, want to find out why it is so. It is a line of knowledge. But I say it is much more important to find out how to make things otherwise than they are at present. That is exactly the problem Buddha set before himself. He sat under a tree and continued till he found the solution. The solution, however, is not very satisfactory: "You say, the world is bad, let us then do away with the world"; but to whose profit, as Sri Aurobindo asks very pertinently? The world will no longer be bad, since it will exist no more. The world will have to be rolled back into its origin, the original pure existence or non-existence. Then man will be, in Sri Aurobindo's words, the all-powerful master of something that does not exist, an emperor without an empire, a king without a kingdom. It is a solution. But there are others, which are better. We consider ours to be the best. There are some who say, like the Buddha, evil comes from ignorance, remove the ignorance and evil will disappear. Others say that evil comes from division, from separation; if the universe were not separated from its origin, there would be no evil. Others again declare that it is an evil will that is the cause of all, of separation and ignorance. Then the question is, where does this bad will come from? If it were at the origin of things, it must have been in the origin itself. And then some question the bad will itself,—there is no such thing, essentially, fundamentally, it is pure illusion.

Do animals have a bad will?

I do not think so. Things spoken of in relation to animals as

monstrous are not really due to a bad will. Let us take for example the insect world. Of all animals it is this species which seems to have most the attribute of wickedness, something akin to a bad will. It may, however, be simply that we are applying our own mode of consciousness to theirs, we impute bad will to an action which is not really of the kind. For example, there are insects whose larva can live only upon a living being; they have to feed upon a living creature, they do not get nourishment from dead flesh. So the parent insect before laying the eggs that are to become larvae first prepares the ground: it finds another insect or a small animal, stings into a nerve centre and paralyzes it; then safely lays eggs in that paralysed body, which not being dead feeds the larvae when they come out of the eggs. All this looks very much machiavellian. But nothing is reasoned out there, it is pure instinct. Would you call it bad will? It is simply the will to propagate. You can say perhaps that these insects are moved by a spirit of the species which is conscious and has a conscious will and that this will is an evil will. These beings that create or form the various species of the insect world—many working in a much more monstrous way than the example I have given—must then truly be frightful, inspired by a perverse and diabolic imagination. Quite possible. For it is said that the origin of the insect world is in the vital; the builders of that world belong to the vital and not to the material plane of consciousness; in other words, they not only symbolise, but they represent and live the evil will. They are fully conscious of their evil will and they exercise that will deliberately and with a set purpose. Man's bad will is often only a reflection, an imitation of the bad will of vital beings which is a will clearly hostile to created world and whose express intention it is to make things as painful, as difficult, as ugly, as monstrous as possible. It is these beings, some say, that have created the insects. Even then, the insects cannot be described as representing the evil will, since they do not do mischief purposely, they are moved by an unconscious will in them. The bad will is really that will which does evil for the sake of doing evil, which seeks to destroy for the sake of destroying, that takes pleasure in doing wrong. In the animal I do not think there is this kind of evil will, especially in the higher species. What is there is the in-

instinct of self-preservation, obscure and violent reactions, but not the kind of evil that human will shows in the perverse human mental. I believe it is the human mind under the direct influence of vital beings that begins to work in the perverse way. Titans, Asuras are the beings of ill-will, they belong totally to the vital world and when they manifest themselves in this world of ours, they mean mischief, they do evil for the sake of doing evil, they destroy for the sake of destroying, they have the delight of negation.

What is instinct exactly? It is Nature's consciousness. Nature is conscious of her action; it is not an individual consciousness. It is a global or collective consciousness. There is also a consciousness of the species. Each species has its consciousness which is called sometimes the spirit of the species, that is to say, a conscious being presiding over a particular species. Nature is conscious in the sense that she knows what she wants, she knows her whither and her how, her end and the way to go towards it. To man much of Nature seems incoherent, because his consciousness is narrow and he has not an overall vision. When you look at the small details, the little fragments, you do not understand; you do not find any link, sequence, sense. But Nature has a conscious will, she is a conscious being. Perhaps the word "being" is too human. When we speak of Nature's being, we naturally think of the human being, only a little bigger, or perhaps much bigger but working more or less in the same way. But it is not so. Instead of the word "being", I would prefer the word "entity". The conscious entity that is Nature has a conscious will and it does things much more deliberately and purposively than man, and it has formidable forces at its disposal. Man speaks of blind and violent Nature. But it is man who is blind and violent, not nature. You say an earthquake is a terrible affair. Thousands of houses crash into dust, millions of people are killed, whole cities devastated, entire portions of earth are swallowed up etc., etc. Yes, from the human point of view Nature seems monstrous. But what has she done after all? When you get a knock on your body somewhere there appears a blue patch. Are you worried about it? Your earthquake is nothing more than a reshuffling of a cell in your body. You destroy thousands of cells every moment of your life. You are monstrous! That is

the relative proportion. And consider, we are speaking of earth alone and earthly events. But what is this earth itself in the bosom of the universe? A point, a zero. You are walking on the ground and are not looking down. You place one step forward and then another and you trample thousands of innocent ants under your feet. If you were an ant you would have cried out, what a cruel and stupid force! Imagine other forces stalking about much bigger than yourself and under their casual steps millions of creatures like you are crushed, continents are pressed down and mountains kicked up. They do not even notice such catastrophic happenings! The only difference between man and ant is that man knows what happens to him and the ant does not. But even there are you sure?

Why are Dreams Forgotten?

It is because dreams do not occur always in the same domain. It is not always the same part of the being that dreams nor is it the same place where one dreams. If one were in conscious communication with all the parts of one's being then one would remember all his dreams. But it is only with a few parts of your being that you remain in conscious contact in sleep. For example, you have a dream in the subtle physical, that is to say, in the domain very near the physical. This generally happens towards the end of the night, in the early hours of the morning just before you get up (say between four and five). Before rising from bed, if you remain very quiet, without making any movement and concentrate a little, you will be able to remember the dreams that you had immediately before: the communication between the physical and the subtle physical being close, you would be able to remember easily enough. Now if you begin from the beginning what happens is something like this: As you fall into sleep, the body becomes quiet and the vital too goes to rest; but the mind continues to be active, it has not gone to sleep. You have now what are called mental dreams built out of all kinds of ideas and imaginations set free. After a time the mind gets tired and falls silent; the vital has rested sufficiently and wakes up in its turn and moves about. Your dreams of the mental domain are pushed back giving place to vital dreams. When you are active in the vital you very often go out of your body, visit all kinds of places and get involved in various exploits and adventures. If you wake up suddenly then, you would remember your vital exploits in sleep. Some people train themselves to get up at fixed hour of the night. They thus bring to memory the dreams they had just before

waking. Now the vital too after having been sufficiently active gets tired and goes to rest. Yet another part of the being now replaces the vital and comes forward. It may be the turn of the subtle physical to enter the arena. The vital is pushed back and you lose contact with it.

To become conscious of all the various movements of your nights, to recover them in your memory, some sort of training is necessary. The different states of the being in which you roam at night are, as you have seen, usually separate from each other. There is a gap in between two states; you jump from one to the other. There is no highway passing through all the domains of your consciousness connecting them without break or interruption. That means forgetfulness. When you leap from one into the other, you push back, that is forget, the one you leave behind. So you have to construct a bridge and very few people know how to do it; it requires more engineering skill than to build a material bridge. You may have very wonderful experiences in sleep, but you forget them all; perhaps you remember, as I have said, the last one, the one nearest to the physical mind. The best way then to remember and become conscious of the whole night is to begin at the end and go backward. Catch hold of the last image that still persists in your memory, like the loose end of a thread and then pull, pull slowly, till image after image comes back: it is something like the unrolling of a cinema film in the reverse direction. When you lose trace, stop and concentrate a little; try to call back whatever stray bit or faint impression still persists or can be more easily revived and then again pull slowly, gently, pick up whatever shows itself, try to join the bits. In this way, after some trial and training you will be able to recover a good part of the lost underworld.

There are, however, many ways of setting about the thing. For you must know that your nights are not all the same. Each one is different and brings its own kind of sleep and dream. As each day is different having its own particular kind of activity, each night too likewise comes with its peculiar experiences. You may think that one day is more or less exactly like the previous day, that you are doing the same thing from day to day; but it is not so. Outwardly the activities may appear to be the same, but really their nature and significance vary from

one day to another. No two moments are alike in the universe. Your night too is an universe of its own kind. Each night brings its own problem and needs its own solution.

On Occultism

It has been often said and it is very true that as soon as you enter the domain of the invisible, the very first things you meet are literally frightful. If you have no fear, then alone you are safe; but the least fear means the utmost peril. It is for this reason that in ancient days the aspirant had to pass through a severe discipline for a long time precisely with the object of getting rid of fear and therefore of all possibility of danger before he was permitted to start on the way.

That is why till now I have not spoken to you of it. But if any of you feel you have a disposition for such things, or some special aptitude in this direction and are ready to surmount all weaknesses, well, I am at your disposal, ready to help you and initiate you into the mysteries. But I am afraid you have still to grow a little more, become more mature before I can take up the charge.

Of course, age is really no bar. I was doing occultism when I was twelve years old. But I must tell you I had no fear, I had fear of nothing. Here you come out of the body, you are connected with the body by the very tiniest, almost imperceptible, bit of thread, as it were. If the thread snaps, there is an end of it all, the end of your life. So you come out into another world and begin to look about and see what kind of world it is. Generally, the first things you see, as I said, are absolutely terrifying. In your normal view, the air about you is empty; there is nothing—you see the blue of the sky or the white cloud or the sunshine and everything is beautiful. But when you have the other sight, the picture is quite different. You see that the whole atmosphere is filled with a multitude of small formations, which are the remains of desires and mental deformations and they crowd about you in such a way that

the whole thing gives you a very disagreeable impression. Indeed, it is positively ugly more often than not. They come near you, attack you, press upon you and you fear and tremble. Then they assume formidable proportions. But if you are not shaken, if you can look with the eye of a calm curiosity, you will find then there is nothing so very terrifying. Things are not beautiful perhaps, but they are not frightful either.

I shall tell you a story to illustrate my point. I knew a Dane who was a painter, a painter of some talent. He was interested in occultism. Some of you might have heard of him. He had come here and met Sri Aurobindo. He did a portrait too of Sri Aurobindo. It was the first Great War. He returned to France and saw me. He asked me to teach him this science. I taught him how to come out of the body, how to maintain control, etc., etc. I told him especially, what I tell you now, not to have fear. Now he came to me one day and narrated his experience of a night. He had a dream; but of course it was not a dream: he knew how to come out of the body and was out consciously. Once out he was trying to find where he was. Suddenly he saw moving towards him a tiger, huge and formidable, evidently with dire intentions. He remembered, however, my advice. So he kept calm and quiet and said to himself: "There is no danger, I am protected, nothing can happen to me, I am surrounded by the power of protection." And he looked straight at the animal calmly and fearlessly. As he kept on gazing, strange to say, he saw the tiger diminishing in size, shrinking and shrinking, till at last it turned into a small harmless cat!

What did the tiger represent? I told the painter that perhaps in the course of the day or at some time he was angry with some one and indulged in violent thoughts, wishing him harm, etc. Now, as in the physical world, so too in the occult world there is a law of action and reaction or return movement. You cherish a bad thought; it returns upon you as an attack from outside. So the tiger might have represented some bad thought or impulse in him which came back upon him, like, as it is said, a boomerang. It is exactly one of the reasons why one should have control over one's thoughts and feelings and sensations. For if you think ill of a person, wish unpleasant things for him, then in your dream you are likely to see the person

coming to attack you, more violently perhaps than you thought of doing. In your ignorance and impulse of self-justification you say, "Just see, was I not right in my feeling towards this man, he wanted to kill me!" In point of fact, however, the contrary is the truth. It is a common law in occultism that if you make a formation—a mental formation, for example, to the effect that an accident or some unpleasant thing should happen to a person and you send out the formation to do its work, then, if it so happens that the person concerned is on a higher level of consciousness, that is to say, if he wishes harm to none, is quite disinterested and indifferent in the matter, then the formation approaches him but does not enter into his atmosphere or touch him, it rebounds upon the sender. In that case a serious accident may happen to the sender of the formation: if one wishes death to another, death may come to himself. That is often the result of *black magic* which is a deformation of occultism.

Formations are of many kinds. A formation is made for a particular work. When the work is done, the formation too dissolves. But it is a huge and complex subject. You cannot learn the whole of chemistry in one hour.

I shall tell you another story in this connection, for it has an occult bearing.

There was a very well-known scientist in Paris. He has written the story in a book of his. He wanted to know to what extent man's reason can affect or influence his reflex movements, how far one can control one's instinctive or subconscious impulses by the force of conscious intelligence. So one day he went to the Zoo. Among the animals there were huge snakes, one was particularly notorious for its vicious character, that is to say, it could be easily excited and enraged. It was a very big animal, black but beautiful. The serpents were of course kept within glass cases, the glass being sufficiently thick to prevent any possibility of accident. He came before meal-time, when it was hungry; for after food they go to sleep. He stood before the glass-pane, quite near, and began teasing and exciting the animal. I do not remember exactly what he did to rouse the animal, but there it was wild with anger; it shot out like a spring and darted at the face of the gentleman who was just on the other side of the glass almost touching it.

He knew very well that nothing could happen to him, the barrier was sound and secure and yet each time the snake darted at him, he leaped back to avoid the blow as it were. The thing repeated itself continually and however much he repeated to himself all the reasons of his safety and security, the reflex gesture could not be controlled.

Only the scientist did not know one thing—an element of occult knowledge escaped him. The physical movement of the serpent was accompanied by a considerable amount of a vital projection of its nervous energy. It was that which struck him with an irresistible force. It was almost like a violent physical shock and mere reason has no power to control it. To check and control, you must learn the occult way.

Mysticism and Occultism

MYSTICISM is more or less an emotional relation with what one feels to be a Divine Power—it is a relation very intimate, emotive and intense with something invisible which one takes for the Divine.

Occultism is the knowledge of invisible forces and the power to handle them. It is a science, altogether a science. I always compare occultism with chemistry or physics; for occult knowledge is very much like scientific knowledge, only science deals with material objects and forces, while occultism deals with invisible entities and energies, their potentials of combination and association. And as by your chemical or physical knowledge you control material phenomena, in the same way by the occult knowledge you control subtle phenomena, make them active and effective. The procedure also is quite scientific. It is to be learnt exactly as you do a science. It is not a matter of feeling or emotion: it is nothing vague or uncertain. You must work as in a laboratory. You have to learn the laws of action and reaction and apply them. Only there are not many people to teach you. Also it is not without danger. There are in this field combinations as explosive as any chemical combination.

It is a thing, however, that can be learnt. But one must have the aptitude. If you have the power latent in you, you can develop it by practice; but if you have not, you can try for 50 years, it will come to nothing. Everybody cannot have the occult power; it is as if you said that everybody in the world could be a musician or a painter or a poet. There are people who can and there are those who cannot. Usually, if you are interested in the subject, unless it is a mere idle curiosity, it is a sign that you have the gift. You then try. But, as I say, it is to be done with great precaution.

Thus, for example, when one goes out of the body—I have often spoken to you of this phenomenon—even if it be just to a little extent, even if only mentally—then what goes out is a part of the consciousness that controls the normal activities of the body, what remains is the portion that is automatic, producing the spontaneous involuntary movements such as blood circulation or secretion etc., also other nervous or automatic thought movements; this region is no longer under the control of the conscious thinking part. Now, there is always in the atmosphere around you a good number of small entities, quite small often, that are generally formed out of the disintegrated remains of a dead human being: they are like microbes, the microbes of the vital. They have forms and can be visible and they have a will of their own. You cannot say they are always wicked, but they are full of mischief, that is to say, they like amusing themselves at the cost of human beings. As soon as they see that someone is not sufficiently protected, they rush in and take possession of the mechanical mind and bring about all kinds of disagreeable happenings—nightmares, various physical disturbances—you feel choked, bite or swallow your tongue and even more serious things. When you wish to go into trance, to have the experience of being outside the body, you must have someone by your side, not only to keep watch on your physical body, but also to prevent the vital entities from getting possession of the nerve centres which, as I said, are no longer under the control and protection of the conscious intelligence. There is a still greater danger. When one goes out of the body in a more or less concrete or material way, retaining only a thin and fragile contact—a thread of light, as it were—with the body, this thread of contact must be protected, for the attack of the hostiles may come upon it and cut it; if it is cut one can no longer return into the body, and that means death.

All that signifies that occultism is not a joke or a mere play; you cannot take to it simply to amuse yourself. It must be done as it ought to be done, under proper conditions and with great care. The one thing absolutely essential is, I repeat once more, to be totally fearless. If you happen to meet in your dreams terrible scenes and are frightened, then you must not approach occultism. If, on the contrary, you can remain per-

fectly tranquil in the face of the most frightful menaces, they simply amuse you; if you can handle such situations safely and successfully, that would show that you have some capacity and then you can try seriously. There are people who are real fighters in their sleep; if they meet an enemy they can face him, they can not only defend themselves, but can attack and conquer.

Meditation and Some Questions

Why am I unable to meditate?

BECAUSE you have not learnt it. A sudden fancy seizes you and you say, "Now I will sit down and meditate". But to sit down cross-legged, cross-armed, eyes closed is not doing meditation. You have to learn how to meditate, even as you learn to do mathematics or play on the piano. There are regular courses of meditation given by all teachers in all ages and countries. There are so many rules and regulations. There are all kinds of instructions, such as, to keep the mind quiet, to be silent and not to think, to gather all your thoughts and concentrate them, etc., etc. You have been taught how to sit, stand, walk and eat: you do not remember the method and the discipline, because you did that when you were very young. In the same way if you were taught how to meditate in your childhood, you would not find it difficult to do today. Unfortunately you were not taught. You are not taught things of that kind. You are not taught even how to sleep. You think that going to bed and lying down anyway is the way to sleep. Not at all. You are to learn to sleep exactly in the same way as you learn how to walk or eat. You do not learn so many things, you are not taught. As you grow in years, slowly, laboriously through unpleasant experiences, through suffering and blundering, in the end you come to know of certain fundamental things. And when you are old, and your hairs are grey, you see you are beginning to learn something, when, that is to say, it is too late. Instead of that, if your parents, the people who looked after you, took the trouble of teaching you what you have to do, to do it well—to act well, to think well, to feel well, in the correct manner—then you could avoid all the blunders

you have been making all your life. You are surprised when you fall ill, when you feel tired and exhausted. For you know nothing. It requires years to learn something, to learn even the most elementary things such as to be clean.

To live as one should, in the right way, is a very difficult art. It requires study, it requires practice. Try simply to keep the body healthy, the mind quiet, and the heart full of good will—these are some of the indispensable elements for the basis of decent living; you will see the thing is not easy.

Is some kind of work necessary for us to do, over and above our studies?

That depends upon you, upon your aim. If you wish to do Sadhana, you should naturally give at least some time to a work that is not selfish, that is not done for the sake of yourself. Study is very good, very necessary, even indispensable; precisely because it is just one of the things I referred to a little while ago, which you should learn when you are young, it becomes difficult when you are grown up. There may come, of course, an age when you have done the basic studies and when you have the urge to do Sadhana. Then you must take up something which is not exclusively personal. You must do something disinterested, not concerned with yourself. If you are concerned with yourself only, you shut yourself within a kind of shell and you are not open to the universal forces. An unselfish movement, an unselfish action, however small, opens the door to something other than your little self. Normally you are imprisoned in your shell and you know of the existence of other similar shells only when you knock against them. But to be aware of the one Force that pervades all, of the mutual dependence of things and beings is quite another matter: it is the indispensable basis for Sadhana.

But cannot one study for the sake of the Divine, to prepare oneself for the divine work?

One can. But that requires quite a different attitude. You have to study in an altogether different spirit. First of all, there would be no subject that pleases you, none that displeases

you, neither a class that bores you, nor one that amuses you. There would be no difficult lessons nor easy lessons, neither would there be a teacher who is unpleasant nor another who is pleasant. All such likes and dislikes, prejudices and preferences disappear. You are in a condition when you begin to learn from everything that you meet with, everything is an occasion for an experience, a knowledge: everything prepares you for the divine work, everything is interesting. If you study in that spirit, it is quite all right.

How is it that so much money is allowed to be wasted here? People entrusted with a work seem to spend lavishly according to their whims!

Money is not the only thing that is wasted. The Energy, the Consciousness is wasted a thousand times more, infinitely more than money. There is not a second when there is no wastage, sometimes worse things are there. There is a habit, I hope it is unconscious, to take in as much energy, as much consciousness as one is capable of and then use it for one's personal gratification. It is a thing happening every minute. If all this energy, all this consciousness that is being ceaselessly poured upon you, all were used for the right purpose, that is to say, for the divine work, for preparing the divine work, we would have gone by now far on the road, much farther than where we are at present. But unfortunately everyone, if not consciously, at least instinctively, absorbs as much as possible this divine gift and misuses it for selfish ends.

Who thinks of it?—that this Force is there which is infinitely greater, infinitely more precious than all money power, this force is there and is being given consciously, constantly, with an endless patience and perseverance, with a single end in view, that of accomplishing the divine work—I say, who thinks of not wasting it? Who recollects that it is a sacred duty for all to progress, to prepare themselves so that they may understand better and live better? It is because you live by the divine energy and the divine consciousness that you are able to live upon them, spend them for your own self's sake. People are shocked when they see a few thousand rupees wasted, but they do not notice that a whole flood of consciousness and knowledge is being turned aside from its true direction.

If one wants to do a divine work upon earth, one must come there with tons of patience and endurance, one must be able to live in eternity and wait till consciousness awakes in every one, the consciousness of true honesty.

Meditation and Meditation

SOME people, when they sit for meditation, imagine they have gone into a remarkable condition and are proud of it. But most often what they do in meditation is simply to let loose their thoughts: it is a sort of kaleidoscope that moves in their head. There are some, however, who can remain without any thought for a while; but if they are called out all on a sudden at the time for some reason or other, they wake up furious, protesting that a nice meditation is spoilt and fret and fume against the whole world. There are all the same a few who know how to meditate, they do come to a sort of union with the Divine. Certainly, this is very good. There are others who can follow the train of an idea up to a point, even up to the central point of the idea. This is also very good. But most get into a half-sleepy condition, that is to say, very tamasic. The mind is inert, aspiration inert, the whole being is inert. They can remain in that condition for hours together. Well, nothing is more durable than inertia. And when they come out of it, they think they have achieved something very great. But they simply fell into unconsciousness.

Yes, some know how to meditate. But even supposing you know how to enter into the divine consciousness, that experience must have some effect upon your external life—naturally it would differ according to the person concerned. There are some who cut themselves clean into two. These, as I have said, when they enter into meditation, have or think they have experiences and very fine experiences. But when they come back and begin to act, they become the most ordinary people, with the most ordinary reactions, doing all kinds of things that should not be done. They think of themselves alone, busy arranging their own life, without a thought

for others, whether one could be useful to the world or not. And yet in meditation, they came into contact with some higher and deeper consciousness and reality. It is for this reason that people who have found it difficult to change human nature, have declared it an impossibility and advised that the one thing to do under the circumstances is to abandon the world and escape. Naturally, if all could run away there would no more be any world. But, luckily or unluckily, the existence of the world does not depend upon the will of individuals: they had no hand in the creation of the world and they do not know how it came about. Is it simply because some get away from the world that the world will cease to exist—for them, perhaps, but for others? Although I am not sure whether even they really succeed in getting away. In any case, I do not believe that you can transform yourself by meditation. But when a work is there before you and you do it as well as you can, also while doing it you take care not to forget the Divine and you give yourself up to him so that he may change your being, change your reactions into something beautiful and luminous, then indeed the Divine will transform you.

I have never seen people who left off everything to sit in a more or less empty meditation making any progress; in any case their progress is very small. On the contrary, I have seen people, full of enthusiasm for the work of transformation in the world, devoting themselves to that work without reservation: they give themselves up with no idea of personal salvation. Yes, it is such people I have seen making the wonderful progress. On the other hand, I have seen very many living in monasteries: well, they are not worth talking about. It is not by running away from the world that you will change it: it is only by working steadily at it that you can bring about the change.

Does this mean that meditation is of no use at all?

Meditation will come to you as much as is necessary for you. When it comes it seizes you; then you should not resist. You sit down and go within yourself, withdraw yourself inside and you make the needed inner advance. When that is

done you come out and start again with your work. But above all, do not be vain. People who believe they are exceptional creatures and have more merit, put a bar to all their progress. I must insist on the need of humility. People have often spoken much about it but without understanding it very well. Be humble, but in the right way. If you could but root out this weed that is vanity! How difficult it is, yes, how difficult! You cannot do a single good thing, make the slightest progress, without being puffed up secretly somewhere, cherishing a hidden self-satisfaction! You have to deal hammer blows to break that hard core of egoism. You have to work all your life to destroy this poisonous herb. You think you have done it and you are so satisfied with the idea of having done it at last.

Prayer and Aspiration

THERE are many kinds of prayers. There is one external and physical, that is to say, simply words learnt by rote and repeated mechanically. It does not mean much. It has usually one result, however, making you quiet. If you go on repeating a few words or sounds for some time, it puts you into a state of calmness in the end. There is another kind which is the natural expression of a wish; you want a particular thing and you express it clearly. You can pray for an object or for a circumstance, you can pray also for a person or for yourself. There is still another kind in which the prayer borders on aspiration and the two meet: it is the spontaneous formulation of a living experience; it shoots out of the depth of your being, it is the utterance of something lived within: it wants to express gratitude for the experience, asks for its continuation or seeks an explanation. It is then, what I said, almost an aspiration. Aspiration, however, does not necessarily formulate itself in words; if it uses words at all, it makes of them a kind of invocation. Thus, you wish to be in a certain condition. You have, for example, found in you something which is not in harmony with your ideal, a movement of obscurity or ignorance or even bad will. You wish to see it changed. You do not express the thing in so many words, but it rises up in you like a flame, an ardent offering of the experience itself which seeks increase and greatening to be made more clear and precise. It is true all this is capable of being expressed in words, if one tries to recall and note down the experience. But the experience, the aspiration itself is, as I say, like a flame shooting up and contains within it the very thing it asks for. I say "asks for", but the movement is not at all that of a desire; it is truly a flame, the flame of purifying will carrying at its centre the very object which it wished to be realised. The discovery of a fault in you

impels you to make it an occasion for more progress, for greater self-discipline, for further ascension towards the Divine. It opens out a door upon your future, which you wish to be clearer, truer, intenser; all that gathers in you like a concentrated force and tosses you up in a movement of ascension. It needs no expression in words. It is indeed a flame that leaps up. Such is true aspiration. Prayer usually is something much more external; it is about a very precise object. It is always formulated; for the formulation itself makes what a prayer is. You may have an aspiration and you can transcribe it into a prayer, but the aspiration itself exceeds the prayer. It is something much more intimate, much more self-forgetful, living only in the object it wishes to be or the thing to do, almost identified with it. A prayer can be of a very high quality. Instead of being a request for a fulfilment of your particular desire, it may express your thankfulness and gratefulness for what the Divine has done and is doing for you. You are not busy with your little self and its egoistic interests, you ask for the Divine's ways in you and in the world. This leads you to the border of aspiration. For aspiration too has many degrees and it is expressed on many levels. But the core of aspiration is in the psychic being, it is there at its purest, for there is its origin and source. Prayers come from the other, the lower or secondary levels of being. That is to say, there are physical or material prayers, asking for physical or material things, vital prayers, mental prayers; there are psychic prayers and spiritual prayers too. Each has its own character and its own value. I say again there is a certain type of prayer which is so spontaneous and so disinterested, more like an appeal or a call, generally not for one's own sake, but acting sometimes like an intercession with the Divine on behalf of others. Such a prayer is extremely powerful. I have seen innumerable cases where such a prayer had brought about its immediate fulfilment. It means a great faith, a great fervour, a great sincerity and also a great simplicity of heart, something which does not calculate, which does not bargain or barter, does not give with the idea of receiving. The majority of prayers are precisely made with the idea of giving so that one may receive. But I was speaking of the rarer variety which also does exist, which is a kind of thanksgiving, a canticle or a hymn.

To sum up then it can be said that a prayer is always formed of words. Words have different values, according to the state of consciousness of the person when he formulates it. But always prayer is a formulated thing. But one can aspire without formulating. And then, prayer needs a person to whom one prays. There is, of course, a certain class of people whose conception of the universe is such that there is no room in it for the Divine (the famous French scientist Laplace, for example). Such people are not likely to favour the existence of any being superior to themselves to whom they can appeal or look up for guidance and help. There is no question of prayer for them. But even they, though they may not pray, may aspire. They may not believe in God, but they may believe, for example, in progress. They may conceive of the world as a progressive movement, that it is becoming better and better, rising higher and higher, growing constantly to a nobler fulfilment. They can ask for, will for, aspire for such progress; they need not look for the Divine. Aspiration requires faith, certainly, but not faith necessarily in a personal God. But prayer is always addressed to a person, a person who hears and grants it. There lies the great difference between the two. Intellectual people admit aspiration, but prayer they consider as something inferior, fit for unintellectual persons. The mystics say, aspiration is quite all right, but if your aspiration is to be heard and fulfilled, you must also pray, know how to pray and to whom—who else but the Divine? The aspiration need not be towards any person; the aspiration is not for a person, but for a state of consciousness, a knowledge, a realisation. Prayer adds to it the relation to a person. Prayer is a personal thing addressed to a person for a thing which he alone can grant.

Offering and Surrender

THEY are not quite the same thing: they are rather two aspects of the same thing. They do not belong altogether to the same level of consciousness. For example, you have resolved to make an offering of your life to the Divine. All on a sudden there happens a very unpleasant thing: you did not expect it. Your first movement is to react and protest. And yet you have made the offering; but something in you turns. If you are, however, consistent in your offering, you will hold the protesting part in your hands and place it before the Divine and say, "let thy will be done". In surrender, on the other hand, there is a natural, spontaneous, unprotesting adhesion. Even if there happens something unpleasant or contrary to your expectations, you are equally unperturbed and tranquil.

In the beginning you make a general surrender or submission, in principle, as it were: it is in your inner being. It must be brought forth gradually in the outer being, carried out in all the details of life. That is how difficulties arise. You have made your offering, you say, even you have worked at it for a long time, worked hard, given much time and much will; suddenly you find, upsetting your calculations, something different happening, you have not succeeded in something. So there is a revolt, a turning back and so on. But what you have to do is to renew your offering, reaffirm your adhesion. When the adhesion is complete, when there is the spontaneous acceptance of the Divine Will in everything, in every manner of happening, then comes the surrender, the perfect obedience which is calm, tranquil, at peace in either case, whether things happen in this way or that.

You ask if you cannot make a mistake unwittingly, do a wrong even if you do not want to. It is not likely. If you are

sincere to the core, you are always conscious and you cannot be taken unawares. It is some form or degree of insincerity that veils your sense of right and wrong, makes you unconscious, as it were. Your discrimination is clouded, because you wish things to happen in a way, or do not wish them to happen in another way. On the other hand, if you are straight, if you are indifferent to either way and await only the Divine's will, you will always immediately perceive if there is or likely to be a wrong movement in you; you know it intimately in a very precise manner, for you are ready to rectify it.

Perfect sincerity does not want to err: it will give up everything rather than live in an illusion. It is a very precise movement, but it is also a very delicate movement. For when you do a thing, even the right thing, the mental and the vital are there that seek to profit by it, a profit, at least of personal satisfaction, to have a good opinion of oneself. It is difficult not to hoodwink oneself.

Equality of the Body—Equality of the Soul

EQUALITY of the external being means good health, a solid body, controlled nerves—when you are not shaken by the least shock, when you are calm, quiet, poised, balanced. In that condition you can receive into you a great force in yourself from above (or, from the environing energy around you) and yet not get upset. If one of you at any time had received some such force, he must have known by experience that without a perfectly sound physical health, one could not contain or hold it. You cannot remain still, you are restless, you move about, talk, cry, weep, jump or dance, just to throw out the energy you are unable to hold. You scatter about what it is not possible for you to gather and assimilate. In order to be able to gather and assimilate the force, the body and the nerves must be quiet and strong.

Equality of the soul is different; it is psychological, not physical. It is the power to bear the impact of things, good or bad, without being grieved or elated, discouraged or enthused, without any upsetting or disturbance. Whatever happens you remain serene and at peace. But both the equalities are necessary. There are many equalities, in fact. Apart from the equality of the vital and the equality of the body, there is also the equality of the mind proper. That is to say, all ideas from all quarters may come into your head, even the most contradictory: yet you remain quiet, untroubled, and even unconcerned. You are a witness, you see them, sort them, arrange them, put each idea in its proper place, appreciate the value of each, determine the relation of each to the other, and to the whole, but you are not swayed by any particular one.

Personal Effort and Will

IN personal effort there is a feeling of effort, of tension: the effort is felt as personal i.e. you rely upon yourself and you have the impression that if you do not do at each step what is to be done all will be lost. Will is different. It is the capacity to concentrate upon what one does so that it may be done well and to continue to do so till the thing is done.

Supposing under given circumstances a work has come upon you. Take an artist, for example, a painter. He has an inspiration and has decided to do a painting. He knows very well that if he has not the inspiration he will not be able to do anything good, the painting would be nothing more than a daub. If he were simply passive, with neither effort nor will, he would tell the Divine: Here I leave the palette, the brush and the canvas, you will do the painting now. But the Divine does not act in that way. The painter himself must arrange everything, concentrate upon his subject, put all his will upon a perfect execution. On the other hand, if he has not the inspiration, he may take all the trouble and yet the result be nothing more than a work like other thousands of examples. You must feel what your painting is to express and know or find out how to express it. A great painter often gets a very exact vision of the painting he is to do. He has the vision and he sets himself to work out the vision. He labours day by day, with a will and consciousness, to reproduce as exactly as possible what he sees clearly with his inner sight. He works for the Divine; his surrender is active and dynamic. For the poet too it is the same thing. Anyone who wants to do something for the Divine, it is the same.

How to Feel that we Belong to the Divine

How to feel that we belong to the Divine and that the Divine is acting in us?

NOT with the head, although one can always begin by it; for the light touches the head first. One must feel with one's sensation, that is, sense it in a flaming aspiration that seeks to realise. For example, as it may happen sometimes to an athlete: supposing you are trying to lift a heavy weight and are intensely concentrated upon it. Suddenly you feel without your knowing it how, that another Force is lifting it up, something has taken hold of your hands and is making them do the impossible. The body seems to be inexistent at that moment. Many writers too have the same experience. Something in them which is not their own self thinks, sees much more clearly, is infinitely more conscious, which organises the thoughts and the words. It is not the writer that writes but this something else. At such times the small person which struggles and attempts is no longer there. Indeed, for the experience to be complete and not to disturb it, the physical person must keep quiet as much as possible.

To have such an experience, you must first have the will for it; you must will and aspire, try to be less and less an egoist, to have less and less the feeling of being a particular person. You must have then within you this flame, this ardent yearning, this need of union. It is a kind of luminous enthusiasm that possesses you, an irresistible necessity of your being to dissolve in the divine and not to be separate. True, it is a state that does not last long—in the beginning—you have the contrary experience immediately after. But if you continue,

persist in your will and aspiration, the other state will come again. The two alternate for a time till the complete fusion is achieved. Finally there is no longer the distinction of your personal being and the Divine Being, the two are one. There is no more the state of yearning towards an ecstatic sense of submission in which the two are still separate. The state of fusion and mingling, of complete identity is extremely simple and supremely spontaneous. I heard once from an Indian Sufi at Paris of this state of consciousness. They too know of it.

Is that then the final stage, no more progress after that ?

There is no end to progress. For, this perfect union can happen before the transformation of the body. The union is a thing of the consciousness. There is a great difference between even physical consciousness and physical matter. The most advanced mystic may get to the realisation in the physical consciousness, but that does not include physical matter. The transformation of the material body has not been done nor even attempted perhaps in the past. It can be done only if life is sufficiently prolonged; you do not leave the body unless you will it so and thus have the necessary time at your disposal to bring about the change. Sri Aurobindo once said—and he said it without the least hesitation—that it will take about three hundred years to do it and I can add that it will be from the time when the last stage of union with the Divine I have described has been achieved.

Three hundred years is the minimum, I should say. You must realise what it means to transform the body. The body with all its organs and functionings works automatically without the intervention of your consciousness, and is built upon an animal plan. If your heart stops for the hundredth part of a second, your body goes off. You cannot do without a single one of your organs and you must keep watch over their proper functioning. Transformation means the replacement of this purely material arrangement by a systematic concentration of forces. You must bring about an arrangement of forces, according to a certain kind of vibration, replacing each organ by a centre of self-conscious energy which governs through the concentration of a higher force. There will no longer be a stomach,

no more a heart even. These things will give place to a system of vibrations which represent what they really are. The material organs are symbols of energy centres; they are not the essential reality, they only give a form or figure to it under certain circumstances. The transformed body will function through its real energy centres, not through their representatives as developed in an animal body. For that you must first of all be conscious of these centres and their functionings; instead of an unconscious automatic movement there has to be a movement of conscious control. Thus one will have at his disposal not physical animal organs but the symbolic vibrations, the symbolic energies. This does not mean that there will not be any definite recognizable form. The form will be built up with qualities rather than with solid (dust) particles. It will be, so to say, a practical or pragmatic form: it will be supple and mobile, unlike the fixed grossly material shape. As the expression of your face changes with your feeling, impulsion, even so the body will change according to the need of the inner movement: have you never had this kind of experience in your dream? You rise up in the air and you give as it were a push with your elbow in one direction and your body extends that way; you give a kick with your foot and you land somewhere else: you can be transparent at will and go easily through a solid wall! The transformed body will behave somewhat in the same way, it will be light, luminous, elastic. Lightness, luminosity, elasticity will be the very fundamental qualities of the body.

To prepare such a body 300 years is nothing; even a thousand years will not be too much. Naturally, I am speaking of the same body. If you change your body in between, it will no longer be the same body. At 50 the body already begins to wear out. But, on the contrary, if you have a body that goes on perfecting itself; if each passing year represents a step in progress, then you can continue indefinitely: for after all, you are immortal.

There is another difficulty one has to face in the work of transformation. A particular body cannot change unless there is some sort of a corresponding change in the surrounding bodies and in the surroundings generally also; for one lives and moves through mutual interchange in the midst of others.

A collective change takes more time than individual change. So it is no longer an individual consciousness, but the collective consciousness that has to do the work.

The world progresses. And being in the world you too must progress. It is a progress, however, which the Divine effects in you without your knowledge or collaboration. The progress is therefore very slow; Nature does not calculate the time she takes for her work, she has eternity before her and she is not in a hurry. Centuries and millenniums are mere instants in her march forward. One day she will arrive at the goal she has fixed for her, even at the complete transformation of the body and the advent of the superman. But the work will be hastened if there is conscious collaboration from man. Most people, by far the largest majority indeed, are not conscious of the action of the Divine in them. To be conscious means to be attentive to what is being done, to be receptive and to be passive to its influence. The more you give yourself and the more sincere you are, the swifter and the more assured is your realisation. You can do in a few moments what would otherwise take years. That is the aim of Yoga.

Sincerity is Victory

To be sincere and to be candid are not the same thing. To be candid means a simplicity based, in a large measure, upon an ignorance of things. A child is candid, because he is simple and ignorant and hides nothing; he is incapable of it and has no will to deceive anyone. But sincerity is different.

Sincerity is a most difficult thing to have, but it is also the most effective of things. If you have sincerity, you are sure of victory. But it must be true sincerity. Sincerity means that all the elements of your being, all its movements, each and every one, from the most spiritual to the most physical, from the inmost to the outermost, from the top-most to the bottom-most, all parts, severally and wholly and equally are turned to the Divine, they ask for nothing else than the Divine, they live for and by the Divine.

And it is not an easy thing. To be sincere in a part, to be sincere on the whole, to be sincere at moments is easy enough; everybody can have or achieve that much. It is within the capacity of any human being with normal good will, to be sincere in his psychic movements, even if these are rare. But to be sincere in every cell of your physical body is a still rarer and arduous achievement. To make the body cells so one-pointed that they too feel they cannot live but for the Divine and in and through the Divine. That is true sincerity and that is what you must have.

First you must observe that there is not a day in your life, not an hour, not even a minute when you have not got to rectify or intensify your sincerity. I do not say that you deceive the Divine. None can deceive the divine, not even the greatest of the Asuras. When you have understood that, still then you will always find moments in your everyday life when you try

to deceive yourself. Almost automatically you bring forward reasons in favour of whatever you do. I do not speak of grosser things as when you have quarrelled with a person, for example, and in your anger throw the whole blame upon him. I knew a child who gave a good blow to the door, because it thought the door was at fault. It is always the other party who is in the wrong. But even when you have passed beyond this baby stage, when you are supposed to be a little more reasonable, you do the stupidest of things and produce reasons in self-justification. The real test of sincerity, the very minimum of true sincerity lies here; in your reaction to a given situation whether you can take automatically the right attitude and do exactly the thing to be done. When, for example, one speaks angrily to you, do you catch the contagion and become angry on your side also or are you able to maintain an unshakable calm and lucidity, see the other man's point or behave as one should?

This is, I say, the very beginning of sincerity, its rudiments. And if you look into yourself with keener eyes, you will discover thousands of insincerities, more subtle, none the less seizable. Try to be sincere, occasions will multiply when you catch yourself insincere: you will know how difficult a thing it is. You say you belong to the Divine, to the Divine alone and to nothing or to nobody else; "it is the Divine who moves me and does everything in me." And then you do whatever pleases you; you use the Divine as a cloak to cover your indulgence of desires and passions. This also is a gross insincerity and it should not be difficult for you to detect it. Although this is a very common deception, more perhaps to deceive others than to deceive oneself. The mind catches hold of an idea, "all this is Brahman," "I am Brahman",—and you believe or pretend to believe that you have realised it and you can do nothing wrong. There are, however, subtler movements of insincerity or want of sincerity, even when you have not put on the divine cloak as the cover for your lapses. Even when you think you are sincere there may be movements which are not quite straight, behind which, if you probe unflinchingly, you will find lurking something undesirable. Look to the little movements, thoughts, sensations and impulses, that crowd the margin of your daily life; how many of them are solely turned to the Divine, how many of them are fired with an

aspiration towards something higher? You should consider yourself fortunate if you find a few of the kind.

When I say that if you are sincere you are sure of victory, I mean that kind of sincerity, whole and undivided: the pure flame that burns like an offering, the intense joy of existing for the Divine alone where nothing else exists, nothing has any meaning or reason for existence but in the Divine. Nothing has value or interest if it is not this call, this aspiration, this opening to the supreme truth; all this that we call the Divine. You must serve the only reason for which the universe exists: take it away, all disappears.

Images of Gods and Goddesses

Are the usual images of gods and goddesses true to reality?

WELL when a little child draws a picture of an object, is there any likeness? It is about the same or even worse here. For the child is simple and sincere, while the image-maker is full of prejudices and preconceived ideas, stuffed with things he has heard or read. And he is tied to his constructions. But at times, here and there, very rarely indeed, artists appear with an inner vision, with a great aspiration and a great purity of soul; they do things that are acceptable. But they are exceptions, the contrary is the rule.

I have seen some of these forms in the vital world and also in the mental world; they are truly creations of man. There is a Power from beyond that manifests, but in this triple world of Ignorance man creates God Himself in his own image and beings that appear there are more or less the outcome of the creative human thought. So at times we do have things that are truly frightful. I have seen formations that are so obscure, so ununderstandable, so inexpressive! There are some divine beings that are treated worse than the others. Take, for example, this poor Mahakali. What has man made of her, wildly terrible, a nightmare beyond imagination! Such creations however live in a very inferior world, in the lowest vital world; and if there is anything there of the original being, it is such a far off reflection that it is hardly recognisable. And yet it is that which is pulled by the human consciousness. When, for example, an image is made and installed and the priest calls down into it a form, an emanation of a god, through an inner invocation—there is usually a whole ceremony in this connection—if the priest is someone having the power

of evocation, then the thing succeeds (what Ramakrishna did in the Kali temple). But generally priests are people with the commonest ideas and the most traditional training and education; when they think of the gods they give them attributes and appearances which are popular, which belong normally to entities of the vital world, at best to mental formations but which do not represent in any way the truth of the beings behind. All the idols in temples or the household gods worshipped by the many are inhabited by beings who know only how to lead you to unhappiness and disaster. They are so far away from the divinity that one means to worship. There are certain family Kalis that are real monsters. I have even advised some to throw such an image into the Ganges to get rid of the evil influence emanating from it. But of course it is always the fault of man and not of the divinity. For man wishes so much to make his gods in his own image.

The Yogic Centres

THERE are, of course, the seven well-known yoga-centres in the human body. They are, beginning from below, (1) the end of the spine, (2) the lower abdomen, (3) the navel, (4) the heart, (5) the throat, (6) between the eyebrows and (7) the crown of the head. But there are others extending from below the spine which are not so well known. It is true, however, that the centres in the individual being end with the spine; what is below belongs more to the universal nature. There is a centre above and beyond the crown; there is also, on the other side, a centre below and away from under the feet. The yoga-centres are centres of consciousness and energy; they are the sources of the various types and qualities of consciousness and energy—they indicate the many planes of consciousness-energy. There are people who actually feel that their force and strength come from below, as if these stream into them like a spring from under the feet. This region from below the spine-end to the feet is that of the subconscious and what extends further down is the domain of the unconscious. We may distinguish five more centres in this lower or infra-spinal region apart from the spine-end itself (*mūlādhāra*) (1) the knee, (2) the leg, (3) the feet, (4) the sole of the foot and (5) below the feet. That would make the total number of centres as twelve—the mystic number for completeness or integrality.

The centre at the bottom of the spine, which is the basis of the individual consciousness is seen as a serpent—a serpent coiled up and asleep, with perhaps just the head sticking up in a very somnolent manner. It represents the normal human consciousness, bottled up, narrow, ignorant, asleep; human energy, too, at this level is obscure and mechanical, extremely limited. The whole energy potential, the consciousness-force is

locked up in the physical body consciousness. Now the serpent does not remain asleep forever. It has to wake up, it wakes up. That is to say, man's consciousness awakes, grows and rises upward. The serpent one day shakes its head, lifts it up a little more, begins to sway its hood, as if trying to throw off the sleep and look about. It slowly uncoils itself and rises more and more. It rises and passes through the centres one by one, becomes more and more awake, gathers new light and potency at each centre. Finally, fully awakened, it rises to its full height, erect, straight like a rod, its tail-end at the bottom of the spine and its hood touching the crown of the man's head. The man is then the fully awakened, the perfectly self-conscious man. The movement does not stop there, however; for the serpent presses further on, it strikes with its hood the bottom of the crown and in the end breaks through and passes beyond like a flash of lightning. One need not fear the break through, there is no actual, physical breaking or fracture of the skull. Although it is said that once you have gone over and beyond your head, you are not likely to return, you go for good. In other words, the body does not hold together very long after the experience, it drops and dies. And yet it need not be so, it is not the whole truth. For when you have gone beyond, you can come back too, carrying the superconscient light with you. That is to say, the serpent, now luminous,—pure and free energy—can enter the body again, this time with its head down and the tail up. It enters blazing, illumining with its superconscient light the centres one by one, giving man richer and richer consciousness, energy and life, transforming the being more and more. The Light comes down easily enough to the heart region; then the difficulty begins, the regions below gradually become darker and denser and it is hard task for the Light to penetrate as it goes further down. If it succeeds in reaching the bottom of the spine, it has achieved something miraculous. But there is a further progress necessary, if man—and the world with him—is to realise a wholly transformed supraconscient life. In other words, the Light must touch and enter not only the physical stratum of our being but the others too that lie below, the subconscious and inconscient. That has been till now a sealed dungeon, something impossible to approach and tackle.

And yet it is not an impossibility. Not only is it not im-

possible, we have to make it possible. Not only so, man's destiny demands that it should be inevitable. If man is to be a transformed being, if he is to incarnate here below something of the Divine Reality, if his social life on earth is to be the expression of the light and harmony of the Spirit Consciousness, then he has to descend into these nether regions, break open the nethermost as he has done in regard to the uppermost and unite the two.

Here is a curious story about man and his destiny. What is he, the normal man? He is a slave, a bond slave. He may have the illusion that he has ideas and movements, his own, he has even free scope to put them to execution. But it will not take long to discover that it is an illusion, a great deception. His plans do not mature, his efforts beat an iron wall. The more he observes and sees things squarely he finds that he is bound hand and foot. He is driven by forces and things over which he has no control whatsoever. He is a slave to circumstances; he is checked by the will of others. His own will has no power or scope; it is wholly ineffectual. He feels more and more a great burden pressing upon the back of the head bending it down, a heavy weight lies upon his shoulders. He somehow trudges on like a beast of burden. He has no free choice or will; his wishes and desires are not consulted. He is driven helplessly on.

But the story does not end here. Man can, if he chooses, alter the situation, turn the tables. He has in him the source of freedom—what he vaguely feels in his outer consciousness; there is a centre from where he is capable of reacting and reasserting. It is the centre where lies his *dharma*, the law of his being. It is his soul. If he once comes in contact with that, makes that the base of his life, from that moment he is free. He holds his head erect. He is no longer bent down. The burden of inexorable circumstances weighs no more on him. He has transcended the circumstances, he stands over them, looks over them. He is now the master and they obey him, he has not to obey them.

This consummation is supremely effected when there is the double breaking of the barrier I was speaking about. The first is the piercing of the veil above, when the consciousness rises into the superconscient, takes the human being into

the divine being; the second is the rending of the lower veil and the descent of the divine consciousness into the most material, the subconscient and the inconscient, realising the divine life on earth.

The Inner and the Outer

THE external part of the being is turned to the Divine: you are conscious of your ideal and as much as possible you conform your behaviour to it. You appear what you want to be. But just behind the line, on the other side of your consciousness—in the subconscious, as it is called—the picture is different. The light has not touched there: the movements go the other way. Things—thoughts, impulses, feelings—hide which you would not like to own. Not that you consciously and deliberately hide them: but they are there as inevitable part and parcel of the original ordinary nature. They form the backyard of the consciousness; there are all kinds of nooks and corners, if not quite open spaces, which have accumulated darkness and dirt. This two-sidedness is common, in fact, universal; you have to be one-sided, that is, of one piece, wholly turned to the light. You must be conscious of these hidden elements and bring them out, expose them to the light calmly, candidly, fearlessly, so that the luminous force may act on them. They have to be pulled out and rejected, or if possible, to be purified and changed. Some are capable of change and become right movements; others are wholly wrong, they belong to the inferior consciousness and have to be cast away without pity.

And this Agile Reason

REASON is an agility gymnast. It can move in all varieties of ways, make infinite twists, the most impossible contortions with equal ease and skill. It does not seek the truth, although it may pretend to do so; for it cannot find the truth. The law of uncertainty or indeterminacy seems also to be the last word of modern Science. What Reason does and can do is to justify, find arguments for whatever position it is put in or called upon to support. Its business is to supply "proofs": it can do so as the spider brings out of itself the whole warp and woof of the cobweb. There is no truth, that is to say, no conclusion which it cannot demonstrate and all with equal cogency. That was indeed the great discovery of the great Kant who described it as the antinomies of Reason. Reason finds it infinitely exhilarating to pirouette *ad infinitum*, i.e., beating about the bush without caring to look for the fact or reality hidden in the bush.

Is it then to say that this faculty is a falsehood and that it can lead you only to falsehood? Not necessarily. It becomes a falsehood when you try to live according to it, according to an idea or ideas it has taken a fancy to; for then it is bound to land you in contradictions. Otherwise, if it is not a question of practical application, if it is merely a play or playfulness in the mental world, it is harmless acrobatics; and even in its own way it can be of some use in making your brain sharp, alert, strong and supple.

Reason is a bad master; a free-lance, it often goes amuck. But curbed and yoked, reined in and guided by the higher light, it is a help, even a necessity; for it gives the immediate form in which to hold and fix in the physical world the truth movements of the higher consciousness.

The Force of Body-Consciousness

THERE is a state of consciousness in which you perceive that the effect of things, circumstances, movements, all the activities of life upon yourself depends almost exclusively upon your attitude towards them. You become then conscious, conscious to the extent of realising that things in themselves are neither good nor bad, they are so only in relation to ourselves: their effect, I say, depends entirely upon the way in which we regard these things. If we take, for example, a circumstance as a gift from God, as a divine Grace, as an outcome of the total harmony, it will help us to become more conscious and truer and stronger. The same identical circumstance, if we take it differently, as a blow of Fate, as a bad force wishing us harm, becomes, on the contrary, a damper on our consciousness, it saps our strength, brings obscurity, creates disharmony. And yet in either case it is altogether the same circumstance. I would like you to have the experience and make the experiment. For your ideal is to be master of yourselves. But not that only. You should not only be master of your own selves, but master of the circumstances of your life, the circumstances, at least, that immediately surround you and concern you. You must note further that it is an experience that is not confined to the mind alone: it need not happen in your head only, it may and indeed must continue into the body. Certainly, this is a realisation needing great labour, much concentration and self-mastery: you have to force the consciousness into the body, into dense Matter. It is the attitude of the body that will in the end determine everything: shocks and contacts of the outside world will change its nature according to the way in which they are received by the body. And if you attain perfection in that line, you can become even master of accidents. Such a

thing is possible, not only possible, but it is bound to happen, for it is a forward step in man's progress. First of all, you have to realise the power in your mind to the extent that it can act upon circumstances and change their effect upon you. Then the power can descend into Matter, into the substance, the cells of your body and endow the body with this capacity of control over things outside and around you.

There is nothing impossible in the world. We ourselves put the bar: always we say, this is possible, that is impossible, one can do this, one cannot do that. Sometimes we admit a thing to be possible but ask who would do it, so it is impossible and so on. Like slaves, like prisoners we bind ourselves to our limits. You call it common sense, but it is a stupid, narrow and ignorant sense; it does not truly know the laws of life. The laws of life are not what we think them to be, what our mind or intellect conceives them to be; they are quite otherwise.

The Body and the Psychic

1

You ask why the body has a limited receptive power. The reason is that in the physical world things must not get mixed up, they must remain somewhat stable, in shape and position. For example, if your body suddenly began to melt and flow towards another, it would be rather troublesome; you would find it disgusting if the body of your neighbour, like a fluid, were to pour into your own fluid body. It is to prevent such a mixture that a greater concentration in masses was necessary, a kind of fixity of force that separates them. Indeed it was to separate one individuality from another that this fixity was needed. And it is precisely this fixity again that prevents the body from progressing as rapidly as it could and should. As you grow up and attain your normal size and constitution, you become more and more rigid in your body. As a child you have this plasticity of growth. Children change continually, they change visibly. This plasticity, this growth and development continue, so long as you remain young. But beyond, say, forty, people generally feel that they have reached their goal, they sit down to gather the fruits of their labour; they gradually become dry as dust, hard like old wood, and even like stone in the end. The body then not being able to adapt itself to the movement of the inner change, gets fossilised and crumbles, which means death.

After Death there is then no further progress ?

That depends. There is a kind of progress sometimes. There are, for example, writers, musicians, artists, people who lived

on a high mental level, who feel that they have yet something to do upon earth, they did not finish their work, fulfil their mission, reach the goal they set before themselves. So they wish to remain in the earth's atmosphere as much as possible, retain as much cohesion of their being as needed and seek to manifest themselves and progress through other living human forms. I have seen many such cases. I shall tell you the very interesting case of a musician, a pianist, a pianist of a very high order; he had hands that had become something marvellous, full of skill, accuracy, precision, force, swiftness; it was truly remarkable. The man died comparatively young and with the feeling that had he lived he would have gone on advancing in his musical self-expression. Such was the intensity of his aspiration that his subtle hands retained their form without getting dissolved and wherever there was someone passive and receptive and at the same time a good musician the hands of the dead man would enter into the living hands that played. In the case that I saw the man used to play well enough normally but quite in the ordinary way; he became, however, as he continued to play all on a sudden not only a virtuoso, but a marvellous artist; it was the hands of the other person who made use of him. The same thing may happen with regard to a painter; in his case too, the hands are the instrument. For certain writers also a like thing may happen; but here it is the brain of the dead man that retains its formation and it is this that enters the brain of the living writer which must be receptive enough to allow the formation in all its precision. I have seen a writer who was nothing extraordinary in his normal capacity, but used to write things much more beautiful in those moments than he was capable of doing or was doing usually. I know the case of a musical composer, not executor like the one I referred to before, which was particularly remarkable. In the case of the composer, like the writer, it is the brain that serves him; for the executor the hands are the chief instrument. Beethoven, Bach, César Franck were great composers, although the last one was an executor also. The composition of music is a cerebral activity. Now the brain of a great musician used to enter in contact with that of the composer and made him compose marvellous pieces. The man was writing a musical opera. You must remember

what a complicated thing an opera music is. It is a complex whole in which rôles are distributed to a very large number of performers each playing differently on different instruments and they must all of them together and severally express the idea and the theme the composer has in his mind. Now, this man I am speaking of, when he sat down with the blank paper in front, used to receive the musical formation in his brain and wrote down continuously as if he was recording something ready-made placed before him. I saw him filling up a whole page from top to bottom with all the details of orchestration. He had no need to hear any instrument, he did it all on paper; and the distribution was perfect. He himself was not very unconscious, he used to feel that something entered into him and helped him to bring out the music.

You must note here that when I speak of a formation entering into a living person, the formation does not mean the man himself who is dead, that is to say, his soul or psychic being. I say that it is only a special faculty which continues to remain in the earth atmosphere, even after the death of the man to whom the faculty belonged: it was so well developed, well formed that it continues to retain its independent identity. The soul, the true being of the man is no longer there; I have told you often that after death it goes away as soon as possible to the psychic world, its own world, for rest, assimilation and preparation. Not that it cannot happen otherwise. A soul incarnating as a great musician may incarnate again in or as a great musician, although I said in another connection that a soul usually prefers to vary, even to contrast and contradict its incarnations with each other. Take for example, the great violinist, Isaïe; he was a Belgian and the most marvellous violinist of his century. I knew him and I am sure he was an incarnation, at least, an emanation, of the soul that was the great Beethoven. It may not have been the whole psychic being that so reincarnated, but the soul in its musical capacity. He had the same appearance, the same head. When I saw him first appearing on the stage I was greatly surprised, I said to myself, he looks so like Beethoven, the very portrait of that great genius. And then he stood, the bow poised, one stroke and there were in it three or four notes only, but three or four supreme notes, full of power, greatness and grandeur;

the entire hall was charged with an atmosphere marvellous and unique. I could recognise very well the musical genius of Beethoven behind. It may be possible here too the soul of Beethoven in its entirety—the whole psychic being—was not present; the central psychic might have been elsewhere gathering more modest, commonplace experiences, as a shoemaker, for example. But what was left and what manifested itself was something very characteristic of the great musician. He had disciplined his mental and vital being and even his physical being in view of his musical capacity and this formation remained firm and sought to reincarnate. The musical being was originally organised and fashioned around the psychic consciousness and therefore it acquired its peculiar power and its force of persistence, almost an immortality. Such formations, though not themselves the psychic being, have a psychic quality, are independent beings, possess their own life and seek their fulfilment by manifesting and incarnating themselves whenever the occasion presents itself.

Can a Psychic Being take two bodies at the same time ?

The matter is not so simple. I have told you often that the psychic being is the result of an evolution, that is to say, it is the expression of the divine consciousness that has entered and spread itself into Matter and slowly raises Matter and develops it so that it may return to the Divine. The psychic being is formed progressively by the divine centre through many lives or incarnations. There comes a time when it attains a kind of perfection, the perfection of its growth and formation. It has then often an aspiration towards greater realisation, a further progress to manifest better or further the Divine. As the result of this pull, it generally draws towards itself a being of a higher order, from a higher plane, from the Overmind, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, a being of involution who incarnates in the psychic being. These overmental entities are termed gods and divinities by men. Now when the fusion takes place, of a god into a psychic being, the latter naturally increases in stature and partakes of the nature of the god and acquires also the capacity to produce emanations; that is to say it throws out of itself a part which possesses an independent existence and can

incarnate in others. In this way there may be not only two but several emanations or projections of the same original being. In other words, there may be a single psycho-divine origin but many personalities coming out of it. That is how it happens sometimes that different people feel a sort of affinity and even identity, and with reason, because they carry within them the same deity, out of which they, that is, their psychic being came. It is not the same thing as the doubling of the personality where in throwing oneself out of oneself one loses a portion, as when you cut a body into two: there are only two halves. Here the projection is a whole and independent personality. If you emanate a being out of you, you remain whole and entire without losing anything of yourself and the emanation too is a being whole and entire living its independent life.

2

What is the work of the Psychic? What is its function?

The Psychic is like the wire between the generator and the lamp. What is the generator and what is the lamp, or rather, who is the generator and who the lamp? The Divine is the generator and the body, the visible being, is the lamp. The function then of the Psychic is to connect the two. In other words, if there were no Psychic in Matter, Matter could not come in direct contact with the Divine. All human beings, including yourself, all carry the Divine within you, you have only to enter within you to find Him. It is a unique speciality of the human being, rather of all embodied beings living upon earth. In the human being, the psychic becomes more conscious and formed; more conscious and therefore also more free, it is individualised. You should note that it is a speciality of the earth alone. It is the direct infusion of a purifying and redeeming agent into the most obscure and unconscious Matter to awaken it by degrees towards the divine consciousness, the divine presence, to the Divine Himself. It is the psychic presence that makes of man an exceptional being. Perhaps it is not good to tell it to him too often, for as it is he is already puffed up and thinks very highly of himself and there is no need to

encourage him in that direction. Still it is a fact: so much so that beings from other worlds, worlds of what are known as demi-gods or even gods, beings from what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, are eager to take a physical body upon earth so that they may experience the Psychic, as they do not possess it. These beings have very many qualities which men have not, but they lack this divine presence which is quite an exceptional thing belonging to the earth alone. All the inhabitants of the higher worlds—the Higher Mind, the Overmind and other domains—do not have the psychic being. Naturally, the beings of the vital worlds have not got it either. But these vital beings do not regret, for they do not want to have it. There are, however, a few exceptional beings on this level who wish to be converted and therefore desire a physical body; but the rest do not want, they are bound to the law of their being and cannot repudiate it.

So I say and we are bound to admit that it is an exceptional virtue in the human being to bear the psychic in him. But to tell the truth, he does not seem to have profited much by it. He does not look like considering his virtue as something very desirable, from the manner he has been treating this presence. He prefers to it his mental ideals, he prefers to it his vital demands and he prefers to it his physical habits. I do not know how many of you have read the Bible. But there is a story that I used to like always. There were two brothers, Esau and Jacob. Esau had gone out hunting and felt tired and hungry. He came back home and found his brother preparing a dish. He asked Jacob to feed him. Jacob said he would give him food if he, Esau, sold his birthright to him. Esau said, of what use is the birthright to me now, and sold it to his brother. You understand the significance? You can of course take it quite in the superficial way. But I took it differently. The birthright is the right to be the son of God. And Esau was quite ready to give up his divine right for a mess of pottage. It is an old story, but it is eternally true.

The Psychic Being—Some Mysteries

Does the psychic being progress always ?

THERE are two kinds of progress in the psychic and they are very different. One consists in its formation and building and organisation; for the psychic begins by being only a little divine spark hidden in the inner person and out of this spark comes and gradually develops an independent conscious person who has his own will and activity. As I say, the psychic being is originally like a spark from the divine consciousness: it grows into a conscious individuality through the experiences of successive lives. This progress then is like the progress of the growing child. It is a thing in formation and it remains so for a long time in most human beings. It is not a fully individualised being there, not fully conscious and master of itself; it needs many births, one after another, to build itself and become fully conscious. In the end, however, there does come a time when it is a completed personality, fully individualised, fully conscious of itself and its destiny. When such a psychic being incarnates in a human being, it makes a great difference. For the man is born free, so to say, he is not bound to his circumstances, his surroundings or his origin or atavism, like ordinary people. When he comes upon earth, he feels he has a work to do in the world, he has a mission to fulfil. To that extent then his cycle of progress is completed, that is to say, he has no more need to take birth in a body to make further progress. Till then rebirth is a necessity, it is compulsory; for it is through reincarnation i.e. by taking up a new body that he progresses, develops and grows. It is in the physical life and in the physical body that the soul slowly builds itself until it becomes a fully conscious being. But once it is fully formed,

it is free either to take birth or not to do so at will. There then one kind of progress comes to an end. But if the fully formed being now wishes to become an instrument for the work of the Divine, if it chooses to be a worker upon earth to help in the fulfilment of the cosmic purpose of the Divine, instead of going away and resting in the psychic bliss of its own world, then he has to make a new kind of progress, a progress towards capacity to work, to organise and execute the work, to express and embody the will of the Divine. As long as the world continues, as long as he chooses to work for the Divine, he will continue to progress. But if he wishes to withdraw into the psychic world and gives up or refuses to work for the divine Plan, then he can remain in the static state beyond the range of progress. For, as I have said, progress exists only upon earth in the physical world. You cannot progress everywhere. In the psychic world there is a kind of blissful repose. You remain what and where you are without moving.

Everything upon earth progresses, has to progress. All men, without exception, even those who have no sense of the psychic, whether they wish it or not, must progress. The psychic progresses in them in spite of themselves and they have to follow the curve of its growth and development. That is to say, man ascends in the scale of life and grows, grows exactly as a child does. In the process of growth there comes a time when one reaches the summit and one changes the direction or the plane of progress. At the outset there is the purely physical progress, like that of the child; then there comes the mental progress, later on the psychic progress and the spiritual progress, so that unless progress changes its direction, when it has reached its limit on a particular level, one has to come down the curve, that is to say, instead of progression there will be retrogression, which means in the end disintegration and decomposition. Precisely because in the purely physical world there cannot be a perpetual and constant progress, there is in this domain this curve of growth, apogee, decline and decomposition. All that does not advance must recede. This is exactly what happens in the domain of matter. Matter does not know how to progress indefinitely, it has not learnt it; so after a time it is tired of progressing or growing. Given this constitution, one cannot go beyond a limit. But

there is in man side by side with his physical growth, a vital growth and a mental growth as well. The mental especially can progress long after the body has ceased to progress. The body does not grow; even when it is declining, the mind still can continue to grow, to rise to higher heights. There is a mental ascension contrariwise to the physical descent. But they who do Yoga, who become conscious of their psychic being and are identified with it, who live with its life, never cease to progress, they move upward till the last breath of their life; even when they die their progress does not stop. The body is on the decline, because it cannot keep pace with the inner march forward, it cannot transform itself and mould itself into the rhythm of the inner consciousness. The discrepancy increases so much between the two, that there is a snap at the end and that is death. However, on the purely spiritual level too there is no progress. The domain of the pure spirit means a static condition; there is no progressive movement there, for it is beyond the field of progress, beyond all manifestation. For when you are merged in the Spirit, you have come out of creation and there is no question of progress, or even of any movement.

When the psychic is about to take rebirth does it choose its form beforehand?

It depends. As I have told you now, there are psychic beings that are just on the way of formation and growth, they usually cannot choose at the beginning, they cannot choose very much. But when they have come to a certain degree of development and consciousness, they make a choice; generally when they are still in the body, when they have gathered a certain amount of experience, they decide what is to be their next field of experience. I shall give you an illustration, although somewhat external. A psychic being, for example, needed the experience of power, authority, command and wanted to know the reactions of these movements and also how to turn them towards the Divine, to learn, in a word, what these things can teach. So the soul took the body of a king (or a queen). When it had the necessary experience, learnt what it had to learn, it gave up the body,

being no longer useful. It is at that moment, when it decides to leave the body, that the soul still in the body makes the choice of the next experience. The choice very often takes a course of action and reaction. If the soul has experienced and studied a particular field, its choice falls upon a contrary field on the following occasion. Thus if the soul has had the experience of a kingly position and worked through that to enter into a conscious relation with the Divine, then at the moment of leaving the body that served with Power and authority and command, it perhaps would say: "This time I shall take a middle position, neither high nor low, where there will be no need to lead mostly an external life, where one is neither in great luxury nor in great misery." With that resolution it returns to the psychic world for the necessary rest, for the assimilation of past experiences and preparation for the future. When the time comes for return upon earth, for the descent into a physical body, it remembers naturally the choice it had made, but from that higher and subtler plane at that moment the material world is not seen in the way we see it, it appears in a different form; still one can notice the differences in the surroundings and activities. One has not the vision of the details, but a total or global vision is there. It can choose an atmosphere, it can choose even a particular country. It has in view a certain kind of education, civilisation and influence, the kind of life that it wishes to lead. Then as it comes down and looks about, it distinguishes very clearly the different kinds of vibrations and makes its way accordingly. It aims, as it were, at the place where to drop. But it can hit the target only approximately. For there are one or two other factors besides which come into play. For there is not only its own choice, from above, there must also be a receptivity from below, an aspiration that draws to it the particular being or the particular type of being. Usually the call is from a mother, sometimes from both the parents. If the parent has some aspiration or receptivity, something that is sufficiently passive and open and looking up towards something higher, in that case, the thing appears to the psychic being as a luminous vibration which beckons it. It is the answer to its will. It shows the place it is to go to. It cannot fix the day of its birth. There will naturally be a period of uncertainty, but that is not expected to go

beyond a year. The second factor that somewhat modifies or qualifies his choice comes from the nature of the birth itself. The soul, the conscious being, precipitates into the inconscience, for the physical world, even human consciousness, at its very best, is an inconscient thing when compared to the psychic consciousness. It is as though the soul fell head downmost. That makes it dazed and for a long time it does not know what is what. It does not know where it is, what it is doing nor why it is there; a complete blank possesses it. It is unable to express itself, especially as a baby, it has not the proper amount of brain to understand or manifest anything. Very rarely do children show the exceptional being that they have within them. Cases do occur indeed, but they are very few and far between. Generally it takes time for the soul to come to its own. It wakes up but slowly from its numbness, it is only gradually that it begins to understand that it is there for some reason and by choice. This oblivion is occasioned by the presence of the mind and mental education which completely shuts off the psychic consciousness. All kinds of circumstances, happenings, experiences—external and emotional—are then needed to strike open the doors within, to bring the memory that one has come from elsewhere and for a very special reason. It is the normal longer process. But one may have the chance of meeting early enough some one who knows; then instead of groping and fumbling through ignorance and darkness, you get the light and the help that give you the swift and straight contact.

The psychic will and psychic development are things that are completely outside the range of common notions. Ideas of justice and reward and punishment have no place here at all. Many people come to me and complain: "What have I done in my past life that I have to be under such difficult conditions now, to suffer so much!" I always reply: "But don't you see it is a blessing for you, the divine grace upon you? In your past life perhaps you yourself asked for such conditions so that you may make greater progress through them!" This way of looking at the thing may seem very novel. But truth lies that way.

How is it possible for a psychic being once living the life of intelligence and creativity to enter again into a life of stupidity and ordinariness?

I did not say it quite like that. The psychic being is not stupid. What happens may be described in this way: for example, suppose the psychic being has had the experience of the life of a writer. The function of the writer is to express himself, his perceptions and observations and judgements in words; he has a certain field, a certain range of associations and circumstances in which to live and move. But there are other fields and ranges beyond and outside of which he has no experience. So he may say to himself: I have lived with my head, I know something of the intellectual reactions to life: now let me live with my heart and experience the reactions of feeling and passion. Indeed, sometimes an overactivity of the intellect impoverishes the capacities of the heart. So the psychic being, in order to have this new kind of experience, abandons his intellectual heights, so to say, and comes down to the vital plane. He is no longer a creative genius, but an ordinary man, but with a heart enriched or enriching itself with its intense or generous movements. (One can remember in this connection the story of Shankaracharya who being a Sannyasi from boyhood has had no experience of love: he entered the body of a king in order to gather this experience.) It is not rare to see psychic beings that have reached the maximum of their growth in certain directions, take up a very modest and ordinary life in some other new direction or for some other purpose. One who was a king, for example, as I already narrated once, who has had the experiences of power and authority and domination, the imperial heights, may choose to descend to ordinary life, to work as an obscure person without being troubled by the pomps of high position; he may choose very bourgeois surroundings, very humdrum conditions among humdrum men and things, to procure, so to say, a kind of incognito so that he may work in peace and quite. Can you say it is a decline and a fall? It is only facing life, meeting its problems from another angle, another point of view. You must know that for consciousness, the true consciousness—the consciousness of the psychic—glory and obscurity are the same, success and failure are the same. What

is important is the growth of consciousness. Certain conditions which to your human eye appear favourable, may in reality be quite unfavourable for the growth of consciousness. With your ordinary thoughts and your ordinary reactions you judge everything according to success and failure. But that is the very last way of judging, for it is the most artificial, most superficial and absolutely contrary to truth. In human life, as it is organised at present, it is perhaps only once in a million cases, or even less than that, that truth is given the first place; always there is an element of show mixed up. When a man has success, much success, you may be sure there is mixed up with it as much show.

Past Lives and the Psychic Being

Most people are not at all conscious of what is happening in them. Their consciousness or being is a mixture of mental, vital and physical elements, a kind of hotchpotch. There are a few, very few indeed, who are conscious—conscious of what is beyond the three, viz, their psychic being. For it is only that element which endures, persists through successive lives. Certain people have known or learnt some rudiments of the matter—who believe in rebirth, but conceive it in the most childish manner. Their idea is as if the person changed his body like a robe. There are persons even who have written books describing seriously all the lives they had passed through since the time they were monkeys! As I have said, it is the psychic element alone that persists after death, all the rest gets dissolved. And in 999 cases out of 1,000, the psychic is a very small formation lying behind and taking little part in the actual life of the person. I speak of the average man, not of the Yogi, that is to say, one who has a developed psychic being to the extent that it is capable of controlling and guiding the outer life. How often does an ordinary man get in contact with his psychic being? Years and years pass for many or most to have just a passing taste of this movement. It is this moment that abides and is carried over to the next life, all other things are simply effaced. At a given point of our life, there comes a special circumstance, there is a call within, an absolute inner necessity that brings forward the psychic and the contact is made perhaps for an instant. That experience is preserved in the psychic memory. More than the outer circumstances and the physical events, however, what is cherished in the consciousness is the intimate emotion, the vibration that accompanied the perception at the time. At the

most, a word said, a phrase heard, just a passing scene is all that is stored, net and clear, engraved as it were. But above all it is the soul's state that is the most important thing. It is these scattered elements that serve as stepping-stones or sign-posts on the soul's forward journey. They are the constants that build up the personality of a man. On rare occasions there is a larger clearing, the circumstances preserved are sufficiently definite to point to a date and a historical person. Usually, however, one cannot say, "I was such a person, I lived in such a country or did such things." These psychic flashes, more in some cases, less in others, are the only genuine and authentic records of the story of a person's lives.

It is a being who is completely identified with his psychic, who has organised his whole person, in all its parts, around this centre, in fact, a being of one piece, entirely and solely turned to the Divine that can alone remember or hold in his consciousness something like a totality of his personal history. For in his case even when the body drops, the other parts being integrated and taken up into the soul substance maintain their individual existence; the personality formed around the psychic continues to exist with its memory intact: even it can pass from one life to another without losing the consciousness.

A psychic memory has a very definite character; it has a wonderful intensity. It stores the unforgettable moments of life, those when the consciousness was most luminous, most powerful, most active. They are the happiest and the most fortunate moments of life. But they cannot be spoken about.

There are people who say and perhaps believe too that they were such and such persons and even give a detailed description of their past lives. There are also the well-known spirit communications through a medium at *spirit sitting*. Some one comes and tells you he was Napoleon, another was Shakespeare and so on. How many Shakespeares and Napoleons and Caesars have manifested in this way, there is no counting! There are spirits who are extremely talkative and bewitch you with extraordinary stories, many that seem so true and genuine on the face, many others, of course, full of the grossest self-contradictions. The fact, however, is that usually these spirits are small beings of the vital, often remnants of a dead

person, broken bits of his decomposed personality, desires that have persisted, coagulated imaginations set free that move about and seek to possess and settle upon a living person. The small spirits of the vital are often not of good disposition; they amuse themselves at the cost of the gullible human being, making a fool of him. In that world it is easy to read the mind of others: the spirit sees clearly what is there in your head even if you do not speak it out. That is how it reveals secrets known to you alone, even secrets you have totally forgotten. They can imitate other personalities. They know many other small tricks to confuse or astound you.

The Homogeneous Being

A **THING** is homogeneous when all its parts are similar, are *like itself*; in other words, when the whole being is under the same influence, moved by the same consciousness, the same impulsion, the same will. Normally a man is formed of many kinds of fragments, all disparate, each becoming active in its turn at different moments. A part may become active so different from the previous one that a man seems altogether a new person. Each element in us has its own nature and activity, demands its own fulfilment, acts almost as an independent personality. We are composed indeed of multiple personalities.

Thus, for example, you are now in a very good state of consciousness. You have the feeling that you really live for an ideal, for the Divine and are happy. Suddenly something happens; you meet someone, not very desirable or you do something, not commendable, or you are in the midst of some untoward circumstances and you find you have lost your experience, so much so that you may even lose the memory of it. You wonder how this could have happened. A submerged part of your being has come up, an element that lay aside is now in front; it has come overshadowing or pushing the other into the background.

There are many examples of such double, triple, quadruple or multiple personalities. The separate personalities are not conscious of each other, each acts independently and goes its own way. They live together, but do not mix or mingle with each other; they are contained in the same body, that is the only connection. It is like a sack in which pebbles and pearls—if they are indeed real pearls—have been thrown together and the only bond of union is the sack. This is not homogeneity; this is called heterogeneity.

I knew a person who had a will, a clarity of thought and ideas, who prepared intelligently all that needed to be done with regard to a particular work. All on a sudden there was a reversal of the whole being. Another person surged up who not only did not carry on the work of his predecessor, but undid it all. He destroyed in 10 minutes what had taken months for the other to build up. And you can understand the dismay of the first person when he came back and saw the havoc done: he had to start all over again.

What then should one do? What is the remedy?

You have to find out in you a seat of consciousness, a signpost firmly planted, deep inside, which is at the same time a mirror. All things, all happenings must pass in front of the mirror; they will be reflected there in their true nature, exactly as they are in their truth and not as they appear or pretend to be. And according to their nature and quality you are to give them places around; the signpost will show where each has to go for its place. The Mirror will judge and test each sentiment, each impulse, each sensation that comes up. If it is pleasant, if it is luminous, if it is what it should be, give it a place near the centre. If on the other hand, it is grey, obscure, doubtful, put it away, farther off. If, by chance, any of the unpleasant elements has forced its way up and occupied a near seat, you must warn it sternly and remove it and give it its appropriate seat; when it has recognised itself, changed itself, then only can it be allowed a place within a nearer ring. It is in this way that you should arrange and group all the elements of your being, according to the value and quality of each one around the central consciousness. That is how you organise your being. You build up a pattern of concentric rings, the nearer the ring to the centre, the purer must be the elements that compose it and therefore of greater value and significance. If you can arrange in this way all the parts and parcels of your being around the psychic centre, each in its own place according to its rôle and function and all turned towards the central consciousness and inspired and moved by it and there is no element which strikes a discordant note, then you have the perfect homogeneity of your nature.

It is a very interesting exercise in which you can engage yourself. If you take it up and follow it regularly and assi-

duously, you will amuse yourself immensely and with profit. Time will never hang heavy, it will bear golden fruits. At the end, say of two or three years, you will see, if you look back, how much you have changed; you wonder how you could have thought or acted as you did. You find yourself a considerably changed personality. You can start the experiment from today itself and see how life becomes more and more amusing, interesting and significant.

Service Human and Divine

To wish to serve humanity, to do good to it shows ambition and egoism? How?

Why do you wish to serve humanity? What is your purpose? What is your motive? Do you know in what consists the good of humanity? And do you know better than humanity itself what is good for it? Or do you know it better than the Divine? You say the Divine is everywhere, so if you serve humanity, it is the Divine whom you serve. Well, if the Divine is everywhere, he is in you too; so the best and the most logical thing should be to begin by serving yourself.

Is there then no need for service to humanity? Hospitals, nursing organisations, charitable institutions have not been useful to humanity? Has not the spirit of philanthropy mended and improved the conditions of human life?

Has it, I ask? You have tried to help a few people here and there. But what does it amount to compared to what needs to be done? The proverbial drop in the ocean or less than that even. You remember the story of St. Vincent de Paul? He began giving alms to the poor. On the first day there were ten, on the second some twenty, on the third more than fifty and the number went on swelling in more than geometrical progression. And then? Colbert, the King's Minister, remarked seeing the plight of the saint: "Our brother seems to be giving birth endlessly to his poor people".

I do not think that the spirit of charity has in any way improved human conditions. I do not see that men have become either more or less subject to disease and indigence than before. Charity was always there and misery has coexisted with it ever. I do not think the ratio between the two has diminished in any way. You remember the ironical but

pertinent remark of someone who said in view of science's attempts to cure and remove misery: "Poor philanthropists would be in a sad plight, their occupation will go!" The true reason why one wishes to do charity is elsewhere, it is to please oneself, it is for self-satisfaction. It amuses you to do the thing: it gives you the sense that you are doing something, that you are a valuable member of humanity, not like the others, that you are somebody. What else all that is except that you are vain, full of self-importance, full of yourself? That is what I meant when I said that it is ambition or egoism that makes you humanitarian. Of course, if it pleases you to do the work, if you feel happy in doing it, you are at perfect liberty to do the work and continue. But do not imagine that you are doing any real or effective service to humanity; particularly do not imagine that by that you are serving God, leading a spiritual life or doing Yoga.

Just an illustration of the quality of the spirit that animates humanitarianism. A charitable man will give generously for a thing that is known, recognised, appreciated; he will be liberal if he finds his name attached to the work, announced and pronounced, if there is fame for him in it. But ask him a dole for something genuine, comparatively modest or out of the way, something that is truly spiritual and divine, you will find his purse-strings tightened, his heart closed up. A gift that bears no value to the giver does not tempt the ordinary humanitarian. There is indeed another different category of givers, of the opposite kind, who want precisely to remain anonymous: they would be displeased if their names were announced. But the motive here too is not very different; in fact it is the same motive acting *à rebours*, backward as it were. Here there is an additional element of self-glorification: one gives and people do not know who he is; it is something all the more to be proud of.

You must look into yourself, question yourself before you do a thing and not do it simply because it is the thing normally done and it is how things are normally done. You can do good to others, if you know what is that good and if you possess that in yourself. If you wish to help others, you must be on a higher level than that of theirs. If you are one with the others, level with them in nature and consciousness, what can you do but

share in their ignorance and blind movements and perpetuate them? So it happens really that the first thing to do is to serve yourself.

You will make a remarkable discovery as you proceed to know what you are and who you are. That is how you should begin. "I want to serve humanity. How can I serve? Who is this 'I' that wants to serve?" You say, "I am such a person, this form and this name." But the form you have now was not there when you were a baby: it has been changing constantly. All the elements of your body are being renewed totally. Neither are your sensations and feelings those you had a few years ago. Your thoughts and ideas have undergone revolutions. The "I" covers a sum of ever-changing factors. There is nothing particularly to be called "I": it is only a ring of changes. An empty name seems to be the only constant thing. One element at a time comes forward—an idea, a feeling, an impulse—and that is your "I" for the moment. At another moment another element comes up and becomes your "I". You are not one "I" but a crowd of many "I"s. So what is the value of the declaration of one of the I's that it has found the goal, the truth, the duty you have to follow? Thus if you proceed further, questioning and analysing yourself thoroughly and sincerely, you will stumble upon the reality. You will find that "I" does not exist at all. What exists is something else: it is the one indivisible reality, the Divine alone.

It is this self-discovery that will give you the basic knowledge, the foundation of your life, the discovery that your self as yourself does not exist, you are indeed nothing. This sense of nothingness must pervade your being, fill all the elements of your being before the truth can dawn upon you and the Divine Presence can be felt. And what you have been doing all along is the very contrary thing, asserting your egoism, your vanity—pretending that you were somebody, you could do something, that the world needed your help and you could give that help. Nothing of the kind. When you discover this truth and accept it, when you are humbled and in true humility you approach life and reality, you will find your real career and vocation.

In a deeper sense it is indeed by serving yourself that you serve others best. When you discover a dark spot in you, a grain of egoism, ambition, selfishness, when you do not yield

to its impulsion but surmount it, when you thus conquer in yourself a movement that leads you astray, in the same gesture you make the conquest for the sake of others too, you create the same possibility in others. There can be nothing more dynamic than this setting of personal example. It is not that others observe you and imitate you; the influence is more subtle and more powerful. You create the opportunity, make an opening, bring into active play the force of your realisation, even without the knowledge of others; the others are only benefited by the invisible help that is lent to them. But you must be on your guard here too. You must not say, "I will help others, so let me improve myself". There should not be any such spirit of barter or bargain. Confine yourself to your own business; how others are affected or not affected is not your concern. If you entertain that kind of idea, you invite the same vanity and egoism, by the back door. Yours should be like the blooming of a flower; it blooms out of its own joy and delight of self-fulfilment; in the process, by its very existence it spreads its perfume all around, fills the surroundings with its glad vibration, but that simply happens, it does not do all that purposely or intentionally. Even so the soul that perfects himself: the victory he wins for himself is contagious and extends automatically.

I have said your ego is an illusion. Your "I" does not exist at all. There is nothing like separate, distinct individualities and individual fulfilment. The Divine alone exists and the Divine's Will. He is the single and unique and all-embracing reality. What then is the source of this variety and diversity of existence? What is the significance, if any, of the many individualities and personalities, their appearance and play on the world-stage?

That is another story. I leave it for a future occasion.

The Divine Family

WHEN people, far separated from one another, belonging to different parts of the world or pursuing most diverse professions, meet and gather and work for a common purpose, it means that they are kindred souls, and have met together and worked together before in other lives. They felt they belonged to the same family and resolved to act together and collaborate in a common endeavour for a common ideal. Indeed, the souls, in their psychic reality, are grouped in big families, as it were; they come down in groups again and again to take up and carry on the work they are engaged in till it is complete.

At a given moment, when the time is ripe, they are called up. The souls are like children asleep, in the peace and repose of the psychic world, awaiting the urge or order for another birth. As soon as the order is given, they wake up and rush down towards the earth. When they drop thus into the earth's atmosphere, they are no longer together, they are scattered about all over the earth. One does not know even where one drops. Also once under the material conditions and circumstances here below, things take a very different aspect. For, the inner impulse, the original purpose gets veiled; the psychic forgets and is now surrounded and hedged in by forces, things and persons perhaps quite foreign and contradictory to its nature. Now comes the labour of the soul, to find itself, to look about for the lost end of the thread. The inner urge must be strong enough, the original will categorical enough for the being to surmount all obstacles, pass through all vicissitudes, work through all the windings of a labyrinthine journey and finally arrive. Some perhaps do not arrive at all in a particular life or arrive only to stop at a distance: others arrive not in

a straight line, but, as I have said, after a tortuous and round-about wandering. In other words, in their external mind and impulsion, they look for other things, they are interested in objects that are far other than the soul's interest—like the person who enquired of Yoga, as she thought a Yogi could give her back her spoilt beauty. And yet the soul makes use of such trivial or absurd means to turn the man towards itself, guide him gradually to the place or the family to which he really belongs.

The material world is full of things that draw you away from your soul's quest, from approaching your home. Normally you are tossed about by the forces of ignorant Nature and you are driven even to do the worst stupidities. There is but one solution, to find your psychic being; and once you have found it, cling to it desperately and not to allow yourself to be drawn out by any temptation, any other impulsion whatsoever.

The Nature and Destiny of Art

TRUE art means the expression of beauty in the material world. In a world wholly converted, that is to say, expressing integrally the divine reality, art must serve as the revealer and teacher of this divine beauty in life. In other words, the artist must be able to enter into communion with the Divine and receive the inspiration as to what should be the form or forms for the material realisation of the divine beauty. At the same time, in expressing true beauty in the physical, he also sets an example, becomes an instrument of education... Art not only creates beauty, but educates the taste of people to find true beauty, the essential beauty that expresses the divine truth. That is the true rôle of art. But between that and what it is now there is a great difference.

The decline comes in the normal course of evolution which follows a spiral movement. From the beginning of the last century to the middle of it, art became totally a debased thing, commercial, obscure, ignorant, something very far from its true nature and function. But the spirit of art cannot die; only as it rose as a movement of protest or revolt, the forms it chose were equally bizarre. In attempting to counteract the general debasing of taste it went to the other extreme, as is the character of all movements of nature. One was a servile copy of nature, it was pointed out or not even that. In those days it used to be called photographic art, if one were to condemn it. But now it is no longer a term of condemnation, for photography has developed into a consummate art. Neither could it be truly called realism, for there are realistic paintings which belong to a very high order. That art was conventional, artificial, lifeless. Now the reaction to this movement said: we do not concern ourselves with physical life any more, the reality as we

see with outward eyes is no longer our business; we want instead to express the vital life, the mental life. Hence came a whole host of reformers and rebels—cubists, surrealists, futurists and so on—who sought to create art with their head. They forgot the simple truth that in art it is not the head that commands, but the feeling of beauty in the heart. So art landed into the most absurd, ridiculous and frightful of worlds. Indeed with the two wars behind us we have gone further in that direction. Each war has brought down a world in decomposition. And now we seem to be in the very heart of chaos.

Perhaps we are at the bottom of the curve and it is time to mount up. This disintegration is a necessary prelude; it is even from a certain point of view a better condition than that of the epoch of Queen Victoria or the Second Empire in France, the age of the practical, successful bourgeoisie, of snug contentment and dull mediocrity, of death in life. As I say, the movement of progress follows a curve. In a certain epoch some fine things are expressed in a fine way. Then follows an epoch which is tired of the old things, wants to find new things and express them in a new way. The age of Louis XIV, for example, was an age dominated by the sense of artistic creation and it represented the peak of a certain type of the truly beautiful in art and life. In the course of social evolution other ideas, other needs appeared—those of a commercial age. So the curve took a downward course. For there is nothing so antagonistic to art as commerce. For the association of commerce with art means the popularisation of something which is exceptional: it is putting within the reach of all and sundry a thing which is understood and appreciated only by the chosen few, the élite. Perhaps it is because of this, because art has no outlet in the world, it has in these days turned to other directions, into the domains of the mental and the vital, into sideways and bypaths of consciousness. When, however, better conditions prevail, when instead of the spirit of mercantilism, there appears upon earth the sense of a more beautiful reality, then art will be reborn and come to its own. That seems to be still a long way off.

The art of this decadent epoch is what I call mushroom art. You know how mushrooms grow? They grow anywhere and do not seem to form part, for example, of what you cultivate

or where you cultivate. Just think of it! There is a spot on the wall which becomes humid and you see it soon covered with this growth. You have a tree which does not get the sunlight, you will find its roots covered with mushrooms. It is a kind of spontaneous growth which is not linked to the spot where it grows. It is not a limb of its environment, but something extraneous added to it. Instead of mushrooms I could have spoken of parasites: they belong to the same category. You have seen parasite plants? They grow upon trees, they fix themselves there. They have not their own life and organs, they do not draw their food directly from earth, as all normal plants do; they live upon the life of another, make use of the labour of another. There are also animal parasites that live upon another animal, growing and profiting by its labour. Parasites or mushrooms have no *raison d'être* to be where they are—they are invaders, interpolators, anomalies.

In ancient times, in the great ages, in Greece, for example or even during the Italian Renaissance, particularly, however, in Greece and in Egypt, they erected buildings, constructed monuments for the sake of public utility. Their buildings were meant for the most part to be temples, sanctuaries to lodge their gods and deities. What they had in view was something total, whole and entire, beautiful and complete in itself. That was the purpose of architecture embodying the harmony of sweeping and majestic lines: sculpture was a part of architecture supplying details of expression and even painting came up to complete the expression: but the whole held together in a coordinated unity which was the monument itself. The sculpture was for the monument, the painting was for the monument; it was not that each was separate from the other and existed for itself and one did not know why it was there. In India, when a temple was being built, for example, what was aimed at was a total creation, all the parts combined to give effect to one end, to make a beautiful vesture for God, the one object of their adoration. All the great epochs of art were of this kind. But in modern times, in the latter part of the last century, Art became a matter of business. A painting was done in order to be sold. You do your paintings, put each one in a frame and place them side by side or group them, that is, lump them together without much reason. The same with

regard to sculpture. You make a statue and set it up anywhere without any connection whatsoever with the surroundings. It is always something foreign, extraneous in its setting, like a mushroom or a parasite. The thing in itself may not be quite ugly, but it is out of place, it is not part of an organic whole. We exhibit art today. Indeed, it is exhibitionism, it is the showing off of cleverness, talent, skill, virtuosity. A piece of architecture does not incarnate a living force as it used to do once upon a time. It is no longer the expression of an aspiration, of something that uplifts the spirit nor the expression of the magnificence of the Divine whose dwelling it is meant to be. You build houses here and there pell-mell or somehow juxtaposed without any coordinating idea governing them, without any relation to the environment where they are situated. When you enter a house, it is the same thing. A bit of painting here, a bit of sculpture there, some objects of art in one corner, a few others in another. Yes, it is an exhibition, a museum, a kaleidoscopic collection. It gives a shock to the truly sensitive artistic taste.

I do not say that a museum is not necessary or useful. It is a good means of education, that is to say, getting information about what other people or other epochs did. It is an aid to the historic knowledge of things. But it is far from being artistic. A museum is not the place where art can find its highest or its true expression. There is an art which seeks to coordinate, integrate distinct, discrete, contrary objects. It is called decorative art. And in so far as this art is successful, we are a step forward even in these days towards true art.

Here in India things are and should be a little different. In spite of the modern European invasion and in spite of certain lapses in some directions—I may refer to what Sri Aurobindo calls the Ravi Varma interlude—the heart of India is not anglicised or Europeanised. The Calcutta School is a sign—although their attempt is rather on a small scale—yet it is a sign that India's artistic taste, in spite of a modern education, still turns to what is essential and permanent in her culture and civilisation. You have still before you, within your reach, the old temples, the old paintings, to teach you that art creation is meant to express a faith, to give you the sense of totality and organisation. You will note in this connection

another fact which is very significant. All these paintings, all these sculptures in caves and temples bear no signature. They were not done with the idea of making a name. Today you fix your name to every bit of work you do, announce the event with a great noise in the papers, so that the thing may not be forgotten. In those days the artist did what he had to do, without caring whether posterity would remember his name or not. The work was done in an urge of aspiration towards expressing a higher beauty, above all with the idea of preparing a dwelling fit for the deity whom one invokes. In Europe in the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, things were done in the same spirit. There too at that time works were anonymous and bore no signature of the author. If any name came to be preserved, it was more or less by accident.

However, even the commercialism of today, hideous as it is, has an advantage of its own. Commercialism means the mixing together of all parts of the world. It effaces the distinction between Orient and Occident, brings the Orient near to the Occident and the Occident near to the Orient. With the exchange of goods, there happens an exchange of ideas and even of habits and manners. In ancient days Rome conquered Greece and through that conquest was herself conquered by the culture and civilisation of Greece. The thing is happening today on a much greater scale and more intensely perhaps. At one time Japan was educating herself on the American pattern; now that America has conquered Japan physically, she is being conquered by the spirit of Japan; even in objects manufactured in America, you notice the Japanese influence in some way or other.

Music—Its Origin and Nature

MUSIC, you must remember, like any other art, is a means for expressing something—some idea, some feeling, some emotion, a certain aspiration and so on. There is even a domain where all these movements exist and from where they are brought down under a musical form. A good composer with some inspiration would produce good music; he is then called a good musician. A bad musician can have also a good inspiration, he can receive something from the higher domain, but possessing no musical capacity, he would produce only what is very commonplace, very ordinary and uninteresting. However, if you go beyond, precisely over to this place where lies the origin of music, get to the idea, the emotion, the inspiration behind, you can then taste of these things without being held back by the form. Still this musical form can be joined on to what is behind or beyond the form; for it is that which originally inspired the musician to compose. Of course, there are instances where no inspiration exists, where the source is only a kind of sound mechanics, which is not, in any case, always interesting. What I mean is this that there is an inner state in which the outer form is not the most important thing; there lies the origin of music, the inspiration that is beyond. It is trite to say, but one often forgets that it is not sound that makes music, the sound has to express something.

There is a music that is quite mechanical and has no inspiration. There are musicians who play with great virtuosity, that is to say, they have mastered the technique and execute faultlessly the most complicated and rapid movements. It is music perhaps, but it expresses nothing; it is like a machine. It is clever, there is much skill, but it is uninteresting, soulless. The most important thing, not only in music, but in all human

creations, in all that man does even, is, I repeat, the inspiration behind. The execution naturally is expected to be on a par with the inspiration; but to express truly well, one must have truly great things to express. It is not to say that technique is not necessary; on the contrary, one must possess a very good technique; it is even indispensable. Only it is not the one thing indispensable, not is it as important as the inspiration. For the essential quality of music comes from the region where it has its source.

Source or origin means the thing without which an object would not exist. Nothing can manifest upon earth physically unless it has its source in a higher truth. Thus material existence has its source and inspiration in the vital, the vital in its turn has behind it the mental, the mental has the overmental and so on. If the universe were a flat object, having its origin in itself, it would quickly cease to exist. (That is perhaps what Science means when it postulates the impossibility of perpetual motion). It is because there is a higher source which inspires it, a secret energy that drives it towards manifestation that Life continues: otherwise it would exhaust itself very soon.

There is a graded scale in the source of music. A whole category of music is there that comes from the higher vital, for example: it is very catching, perhaps even a little vulgar, something that twines round your nerves, as it were, and twists them. It catches you somewhere about your loins—navel centre—and charms you in its way. As there is a vital music there is also what can be called psychic music coming from quite a different source; there is further a music which has spiritual origin. In its own region this higher music is very magnificent; it seizes you deeply and carries you away somewhere else. But if you were to express it perfectly—execute it—you would have to pass this music too through the vital. Your music coming from high may nevertheless fall absolutely flat in the execution, if you do not have that intensity of vital vibration which alone can give it its power and splendour. I knew people who had very high inspiration, but their music turned to be quite commonplace, because their vital did not move. Their spiritual practice put their vital almost completely to sleep; yes, it was literally asleep and did not work at all. Their music thus came straight into the physical. If you could

get behind and catch the source, you would see that there was really something marvellous even there, although externally it was not forceful or effective. What came out was a poor little melody, very thin, having nothing of the power of harmony which is there when one can bring into play the vital energy. If one could put all this power of vibration that belongs to that vital into the music of higher origin we would have the music of a genius. Indeed, for music and for all artistic creation, in fact, for literature, for poetry, for painting, etc. an intermediary is needed. Whatever one does in these domains depends doubtless for its intrinsic value upon the source of the inspiration, upon the plane or the height where one stands. But the value of the execution depends upon the strength of the vital that expresses the inspiration. For a complete genius both are necessary. The combination is rare, generally it is the one or the other, more often it is the vital that predominates and overshadows.

When the vital only is there, you have the music of *café concert* and cinema. It is extraordinarily clever and at the same time extraordinarily commonplace, even vulgar. Since, however, it is so clever, it catches hold of your brain, haunts your memory, rings in (or wrings) your nerves; it becomes so difficult to get rid of its influence, precisely because it is done so well, so cleverly. It is made vitally with vital vibrations, but what is behind is not, to say the least, wholesome. Now imagine the same vital power of expression joined to the inspiration coming from above, say, the highest possible inspiration when the entire heaven seems to open out, then it is music indeed; Some things in César Franck, some in Beethoven, some in Bach, some in some others possess this sovereignty. But after all it is only a moment, it comes for a moment and does not abide. There is not a single artist whose whole work is executed at such a pitch. The inspiration comes like a flash of lightning, most often it lasts just long enough to be grasped and held in a few snatches.

Something similar to that experience may happen to you when your consciousness is all attentive and concentrated; you feel suddenly that you are being carried aloft, that all your energies are gathered and lifted up, as if your head has opened out and you are thrown into the free air, into the far spaces

of extraordinary heights and magnificent lights. The experience gives you in a few seconds what one may in the normal course of things achieve after many years of difficult yoga. Only immediately after the experience you drop down below upon the earth, because the basis has not been built; even you may begin to doubt whether you really had the experience. Still the consciousness has been prepared, something definitive has been done and remains.

Music—Indian and European

THE difference is both in regard to the source and the expression and in an inverse way. In European music a very high—spiritual—inspiration is a rare thing. The psychic source also is very rare. But if at all, it is a very high spiritual source, or otherwise it is the vital that is the source. The expression is always there, apart from some exceptions naturally, but it is almost always vital, because the source is very often purely vital. At times, as I said, it comes from high above, then it is really marvellous. At times, more rarely, it is psychic: something of it was there in the religious music, but it is not frequent. Indian music, on the other hand, almost always, that is to say, when we have good musicians, has a psychic source, the source, for example, of the Ragas. It does not come from the top heights, it has rather an inner and intimate origin. But it has very rarely a sufficient vital body. I have heard a good deal of Indian music, quite a good deal indeed. I came across very rarely any that has a great vital force, not more than four or five times. But I have heard quite often that with a psychic inspiration behind. It is music directly translated from the inner into the physical. To listen you must concentrate, as it is something very thin, very fine and tenuous, having nothing of the vital vibration with its strong intense resonances. You can glide into it, let yourself be carried along the flow, entering the psychic source. It has that effect, it acts something like an intoxication, something that takes you into a kind of trance. If you listen well and are attentive and let yourself go, you slowly glide and dip, dip into the psychic consciousness; but if you remain in the external consciousness, such a thin stream expresses itself there that the vital gives no response and finds it extremely flat and monotonous. If, however, along with the

psychic vibration there were also a vital force expressing it, the result would be interesting indeed.

I like this kind of music, with a theme, a single theme moving and developing gradually with variations: countless variations playing out the same constant theme, variations branching out and coming back again to the original basic theme. In Europe too there was something of the kind in its otherwise very different style. Bach had it, Mozart too. In modern times some musicians like Debussy, Raval and the Russian Borodine and a few others have caught something of it. You take a certain number of notes, in a certain relation and upon that scheme you play variations, almost an infinite number of variations. It is marvellous: it takes you deep inside and, if you are ready, gives you the consciousness of the psychic, something that draws you back from the external physical consciousness and links you with something elsewhere within.

Specialisation

You must extend, enlarge, enrich your mind. It must be full of thoughts and ideas. It must be stored with the results of your observation and study. It must not be a "poor mind", a mind, that is to say, that has not many ideas nor the capacity of reasoning and argument. Your mind must be capable of thinking of many different things, gathering knowledge of different kinds, considering a problem from many different sides, not following only a single line or track: it must be somewhat like a Japanese fan opening out full circle in all directions.

You have, for example, several subjects to learn at school. Well, learn as many as possible. If you study at home, read as many varieties as possible. I know you are usually asked and advised to follow a different way. You are to take as few subjects as possible and *specialise*. Yes, that is the general ideal: *specialisation*, to be an expert in one thing. If you wish to be a good philosopher, read philosophy only; if you wish to be a good chemist, do only chemistry; and even you should concentrate upon only one problem or thesis in philosophy or chemistry. In sports you are asked to do the same. Choose one item and fix your attention upon that alone. If you want to be a good tennis player, think of tennis alone. However, I am not of that opinion. My experience is different. I believe, there are general faculties in man which he should acquire and cultivate more than specialise himself. Of course, if it is your ambition to be a Monsieur or Madame Curie who wanted to discover one particular thing, to find out a new mystery of a definite kind, then you have to concentrate upon the one thing in view. But even then, once the object is gained, you can turn very well to other things. Besides, it is not an im-

possibility in the midst of the one-pointed pursuit to find occasions and opportunities to be interested in other pursuits.

From my childhood I have been hearing of the same lesson; I am afraid it was taught also in the days of our fathers and grandfathers and great grandfathers, namely, that if you wish to be successful in something you must do that only and nothing else. I was rebuked very much because I was busy with many different things at the same time. I was told I would be in the end good for nothing. I was studying, I was painting, I was doing music and many other things. I was repeatedly warned that my painting would be worthless, my music would be worthless, my studies would be incomplete and defective if I had my way. Perhaps it was true; but I found that my way, too, had its advantages—precisely the advantages I was speaking of at the outset, namely, it widens and enriches the mind and consciousness, makes it supple and flexible, gives it a spontaneous power to understand and handle anything new presented to it. If, however, I had wanted to become an executant of the first order and play in concerts, then of course I would have had to restrict myself. Or in painting if my aim had been to be one of the great artists of the age, I could have done only that and nothing else. One understands the position very well, but it is only a point of view. I do not see why I should become the greatest musician or the greatest painter. It seems to me to be nothing but vanity.

But it is a very natural and spontaneous movement in man to change from one work to another in order to maintain a kind of balance. Change also means rest. We have often heard of great artists or scholars seeking for rest and having great need for it. They find it by changing their activity. For example, Ingres was a painter; painting was his normal and major occupation. But whenever he found time he took up his violin. Curiously, it was his violin which interested him more than his painting. He was not very good at music, but he took great pleasure in it. He was sufficiently good at painting, but it interested him less. But the real thing is that he needed a stable poise or balance. Concentration upon a single thing is very necessary, I have said, if one aims at a definite and special result; but one can follow a different line that is more subtle, more comprehensive and complete. Naturally, there is a

physical limit somewhere to your comprehensiveness; for on the physical plane you are confined in respect of time and space; and also it is true that great things are difficult to achieve unless there is a special concentration. But if you want to lead a higher and deeper life, you can command capacities which are much greater than those available to the methods of restriction and limitation belonging to the normal consciousness. There is a considerable advantage in getting rid of one's limits, if not from the point of view of actual accomplishment, at least from the point of view of spiritual realisation.

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